Note on the Letters

Not many of Montaigne's letters have been found. The best French edition includes thirty-nine that are well authenticated. Of these, seven are dedicatory letters and one a preface (mostly introducing posthumous works of La Boétie published by Montaigne in 1570), one is an inscription to a friend on a copy of the *Essays*, two are joint letters of remonstrance from the mayor and jurats of Bordeaux; the other twenty-eight are regular letters. Nearly all the regular letters were written in the last ten years of Montaigne's life. Most of them concern public affairs and date from Montaigne's mayoralty (1581–85); more than half of them are addressed to his able loyalist collaborator in keeping the peace, Marshal de Matignon, the king's lieutenant-general in Guienne. Two of the finest are to Henry IV.

Like most letters, these vary in their interest. Many are full of details of persons and places of minor import to any but the specialist. Yet even these, like most of the rest, clearly show Montaigne's vigilance as mayor and his activity as a public-spirited citizen. Trusted and consulted by important persons of both parties, he played a much larger and busier part in the affairs of his time than he ever revealed in the *Essays*.

Most of the regular letters were discovered around the middle of the nineteenth century, but the only complete edition is that of Arthur Armaingaud in 1939 (*Œuvres complètes*, XI, 159–266). Most of them have been put into English by W. C. Hazlitt, whose translation, though generally good, is often very erratic.

This is the first publication of all thirty-nine letters in English. They are annotated, and arranged in chronological order.

1. *To Antoine Duprat*

[August 24, 1562(?)]

To Messire Antoine Duprat,[1] Provost of Paris

In my last letter, sir, I told you about the troubles that ravaged Agenais and Périgord, where our mutual friend Memy,[2] taken prisoner, was brought to Bordeaux and had his head cut off. Today I want to tell you that the people of Nérac,[3] having, through the indiscretion of a young captain of their town, lost between a hundred and six-score men in a skirmish against some troops of Monluc,[4] withdrew into Béarn with their ministers, not without great danger to their lives, about the fifteenth day of July, at which time the people of Casteljaloux surrendered, and the minister of that place was put to death. The people of Marmande, Saint-Macaire, and Bazas[5] also fled, but not without cruel loss, for immediately the château of Duras was pillaged and that of Monségur was forced, a little stronghold where there were two ensigns and a great number of people of the religion.[6]

There every kind of cruelty and violence was practiced, on the first day of August, without regard for quality, sex, or age. Monluc violated the daughter of the minister, who was killed with the others. I have the extreme sorrow to tell you that involved in this

1 The authenticity of this letter has been questioned but seems very likely. Antoine Duprat, seigneur de Nantouillet et de Précy, baron de Thiers et de Thoucy, grandson of the chancellor of the same name, had become provost of Paris in 1553.

2 Captain Memy or Mesny was governor of Castillon and on the Protestant side.

3 Protestant town about seventy miles southeast of Bordeaux, seat of the court of Navarre.

4 Blaise de Monluc (c.1500–1577), author of the *Commentaires*, a great but cruel Catholic general, at this time lieutenant-general of the king in Guienne. Montaigne knew him fairly well, wrote of him in the *Essays* (II: 8, p. 348), and saw his grandson and namesake twice in Italy (*Travel Journal*, pp. 1129, 1162). At the time of this episode Monluc was about sixty.

5 Casteljaloux, Marmande, Saint-Macaire, and Bazas: Protestant towns located in the area between Nérac and Bordeaux. Duras and Monségur are in the same area.

6 The Protestants. Montaigne here, like most Catholics of his time, speaks of Protestantism simply as "the religion."

massacre was your relative, the wife[7] of Gaspard Duprat, and two of her children. She was a noble woman, whom I have been in a position to see often when I went into those parts, and at whose house I was always assured of finding good hospitality. In fine, I say no more to you about it today, for this account gives me pain and sorrow.

Whereupon I pray God to have you in his holy care.
August 24th.
Your servant and good friend,

MONTAIGNE

2. *To His Father:* ON THE DEATH OF LA BOÉTIE

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER THAT MONSIEUR DE MONTAIGNE THE COUNSELOR WROTE TO MONSEIGNEUR DE MONTAIGNE HIS FATHER CONCERNING CERTAIN DETAILS THAT HE NOTED IN THE ILLNESS AND DEATH OF THE LATE MONSIEUR DE LA BOÉTIE[8]

[1563(?)]

As for his last words, if any man is to give a good account of them, no doubt it is I: partly because all through his illness he was as glad to talk to me as to any other; and also because, owing to the unique and brotherly friendship that we had borne each other, I had a very certain knowledge of what he had intended, judged, and willed during his life, no doubt as great as one man can have of another. And because I knew this to be lofty, virtuous, full of very certain resolution, and in short admirable, I readily foresaw that if illness left him the power to express himself, nothing would escape him in such a necessity but what was great and full of good example. Thus I was as attentive as I could be.

It is true, sir, that since my memory is very short and was further disturbed by the confusion that my mind was to suffer from so heavy and important a loss, it is impossible that I have not forgotten many

7 Born Marguerite de Lupé, often known as Marguerite de Torrebreu.

8 This account was published by Montaigne at the end of the volume of La Boétie's *Œuvres* late in 1570. By this time Montaigne's father was dead. It seems very likely that this is substantially a letter written by Montaigne to his father soon after La Boétie died, in August 1563.

things that I would like to be known. But those I have remembered I shall report to you as truthfully as I can.

For to portray him thus proudly steadfast in his brave demeanor, to make you see that invincible courage in a body struck down and battered by the furious attacks of death and pain, would require, I confess, a far better style than mine. Because although whenever he spoke about weighty and important matters during his life, he spoke about them in such a way that it would have been hard to write them so well, yet at this point it seemed that his mind and tongue were vying in their effort, as if to do him their ultimate service. For without a doubt I never saw him so full of such beautiful ideas or of such eloquence as he was all through this illness. Moreover, sir, if you find that I have tried to place in account his slightest and most ordinary remarks, I have done so on purpose. For, being said at that time, and in the thick of so great a task, they are a remarkable testimony to a soul full of repose, tranquillity, and assurance.

As I was returning from the Parlement on Monday, August 9, 1563, I sent to invite him to dine at my house. He sent word back that he thanked me but that he was feeling a bit poorly, and that I would give him pleasure if I would come and spend an hour with him before he left for Médoc. I went to see him soon after dinner. He was lying down fully dressed, and already showed an indefinable change in his face. He told me that it was an attack of diarrhea with stomach pains, which he had contracted the day before in a game with Monsieur d'Escars when wearing his doublet under a silk gown, and that the cold often brought him such ailments.

I thought he was right to go ahead with the plan he had already made to go away, but that he should go no farther that evening than Germignan, which is only two leagues from town. I thought so because the place where he was staying had houses all around it infected with the plague, of which he was somewhat apprehensive, since he had recently returned from Périgord and Agenais, which had been all full of the plague when he left; and then, for an ailment like his, I had sometimes been much better off for a horseback ride. So he left, and with him his wife Madame de La Boétie and his uncle Monsieur de Bouilhonnas.

The next day, very early in the morning, one of his servants came to me on behalf of Madame de La Boétie, who informed me that he had felt very bad in the night from a violent dysentery. She was

sending for a doctor and an apothecary, and asked me to come, as I did after dinner.

On my arrival, he seemed delighted to see me; and as I wanted to take leave of him and go back, and promised to see him again the next day, he asked me, with more affection and insistence than ever about anything else, to be with him as much as I could. This touched me considerably. Nevertheless I was leaving when Madame de La Boétie, who already had a vague premonition of some mishap, asked me, with tears in her eyes, not to go that evening. So she stopped me, and he rejoiced with me over this. The next day I went home, and on Thursday I went to see him again. His trouble was getting worse: his flow of blood and his stomach pains, which weakened him even more, were increasing from hour to hour.

On Friday I again left him, and on Saturday went to see him again and found him already very worn down. He told me then that his illness was a bit contagious and moreover unpleasant and melancholic; that he knew my nature very well and asked me to be with him only for short periods but as often as I could. I did not leave him again.

Until Sunday he had not talked with me at all of what he thought about himself, and we talked only about particular occurrences in his illness and what the ancient doctors had said about them; about public affairs very little, for I found him completely disgusted with them from the first day.[9] But on Sunday he had a spell of great weakness; and when he had recovered consciousness, he said that he had seemed to be in some great confusion of all things and had seen nothing but a thick cloud and a dense fog in which everything was pell-mell and without order. However, he was not painfully affected by this accident. "Death has nothing worse about it than that, my brother," I said to him then. "Why," he replied to me, "it has nothing as bad about it."

From then on – because, from the beginning of his illness, he had had no sleep, and in spite of all the remedies he kept always getting worse, so that they had already tried certain potions on him which they use only in the last extremities – he began to lose all hope of cure, and told me so.

9 La Boétie died in the second year of the French religious civil wars. His "Memoir on the Edict of January 1562" shows his deep concern with the problem and his sense of the necessity of religious unity.

This same day, because it was judged suitable to do so, I said to him that because of the extreme friendship I bore him, it would be unbecoming to me if I did not take care that, as all his actions in health had been seen to be as full of wisdom and good counsel as those of anyone else in the world, he should continue them still in his sickness; and that if God willed that he get worse, I would be very sorry if for lack of advice he should leave any of his domestic affairs at loose ends, both because of the damage that his relatives might suffer from this and for the sake of his reputation. He accepted this from me very graciously, and after making up his mind about the difficulties that had kept him undecided in this matter, he asked me to call his uncle and his wife, and no others, to have them hear what he had planned about his will. I told him that he would alarm them. "No, no," he said to me, "I will console them, and give them much better hope for my health than I have myself."

And then he asked me whether the faint spells he had undergone had not alarmed us a little: "That is nothing, my brother," I said; "these are accidents common in such illnesses." "Indeed it is nothing, my brother," he replied, "even if what you feared the most were to happen." "It would be nothing but happiness for you," I answered, "but the loss would be mine, for I would lose the company of so great, so wise, and so sure a friend, such a friend that I would be certain never to find another like him."

"That might well be, my brother," he said; "and I assure you that what makes me take such care as I do for my cure, and not hurry so much to complete the passage that I have already half completed, is the consideration of your loss and of that of this poor man and this poor woman (speaking of his uncle and his wife), both of whom I love with all my heart, and who will find it very hard, I am certain, to bear the loss they will suffer in me, which in truth is very great both for you and for them. I am considering also the unhappiness that will be felt by many good people who have loved and esteemed me during my life, whose society indeed, I confess, if I had my choice, I would still be happy not to lose. And if I am going away, my brother, I beg you, who know them, to bear witness to them of the good will I have borne them even to this last limit of my life. And then, my brother, perhaps I was not born so useless as not to have the means of doing some service to the commonwealth. But however that may be, I am ready to leave when it shall please God, being fully assured that I shall enjoy the bliss that you predict for me.

And as for you, my friend, I know you to be so wise that whatever your loss, you will still adapt yourself willingly and patiently to whatever His Holy Majesty shall be pleased to decree about me; and I beg you to see to it that grief over losing me does not drive this good man and that good woman beyond the bounds of reason."

Then he asked me how they were behaving now. Well enough, I told him, in view of the importance of the matter. "Yes," he went on, "now, when they still have a little hope. But if once I have taken it all away from them, my brother, you will have a very hard time restraining them." For this reason, as long as he lived thereafter, he always concealed from them his opinion that his death was certain, and entreated me very urgently to do the same. Whenever he saw them around him, he put on the most cheerful manner and fed them with fine hopes.

At this point I left him to go and call them. They composed their faces as well as they could for a time. And when we had all sat down around the bed and the four of us were alone, he spoke thus, his face calm and as if delighted:

"My uncle, my wife, I assure you on my word that no new stroke of my illness or bad opinion I have of my cure has put it into my head to have you called in order to tell you what I plan. For, thank God, I feel very well and am full of good hope. But having learned long ago, both by long experience and by long study, what little security there is in the instability and inconstancy of human affairs and especially in our life, which we hold so dear, and yet which is but smoke and a mere nothing; and considering also that since I am sick I have come that much closer to the danger of death, I have decided to put some order into my domestic affairs, after first getting your opinion about them."

And then, addressing his remarks to his uncle, he said: "My good uncle, if at this time I had to give you an account of the great obligations I have to you, I would not have done for some time. It is enough for me that to this day, wherever I have been and no matter to whom I have spoken about it, I have always said that everything a very wise, very good, and very liberal father could have done for his son, you have done all that for me, both in the care that was needed to instruct me in humane letters, and when you were pleased to push me into public employment; so that the whole course of my life has been full of great and commendable friendly services from you. In short, whatever I have, I hold from you, I so acknowledge it, I am indebted to you for it; you are my true father.

Thus, as the son of the family, I have no right to dispose of anything unless you are pleased to give me leave to do so."

Then he was silent, and waited until sighs and sobs gave his uncle a chance to answer him that he would always regard as very good whatever his nephew pleased. Then, in order to make his uncle his heir, he begged him to take from him the property that belonged to him.

And then, turning his words to his wife, he said: "My likeness (so he often called her because of some ancient affinity between them), having been joined to you by the holy bond of marriage, which is one of the most respectable and inviolable that God has ordained for us here below for the maintenance of human society, I have loved, cherished, and esteemed you as much as I possibly could, and I am quite certain that you have rendered me reciprocal affection, which I cannot sufficiently acknowledge. I beg you to take what I give you of my goods and be content with it, even though I well know that it is little in comparison with your merits."

And then, turning his words to me, he said: "My brother, whom I love so dearly and whom I chose out of so many men in order to renew with you that virtuous and sincere friendship, the practice of which has for so long been driven from among us by our vices that there remain of it only a few old traces in the memory of antiquity, I entreat you to accept as a legacy my library and my books, which I give you as a sign of my affection toward you: a very small present, but one which comes from a willing heart and which is appropriate for you because of your fondness for letters. It will be μνημόσυνον *tui sodalis*."[10]

And then, speaking to all three of us in general, he praised God that in such extreme need he found himself in the company of all the dearest persons he had in this world, and said that it seemed to him very beautiful to see a gathering of four persons so in accord and so united by friendship, for he was assured that we loved one another unanimously for each other's sake. And having recommended us to one another, he went on thus: "Having set my estate in order, now I must think of my conscience. I am a Christian, I am a Catholic; as such have I lived, as such do I intend to end my life. Let a priest be sent for, for I will not fail in this last duty of a Christian."

At this point he finished his speech, which he had carried through with such assurance on his face and such strength in word

10 "A remembrance of your friend" (adapted from Catullus).

and voice, that whereas I had found him, when I came into his room, weak, dragging out his words slowly one after the other, his pulse very low as with a slow fever, and drawing toward death, his face pale and all subdued, it now seemed that, as if by a miracle, he had just gained some new vigor: his color ruddier, his pulse stronger, so that I had him feel mine to compare them. At that moment my heart was so sad that I could not answer him.

But two or three hours later, both to keep up his great courage, and because I wished, in the zeal I have had all my life for his glory and honor, that there should be more people in his room to witness so many fine proofs of greatness of soul, I told him that I had blushed for shame that my courage had failed on hearing what he, who was suffering this illness, had had the courage to tell me. That up to then I had thought that God gave us no such great power against human calamities, and I had had difficulty believing what I had come across on this subject in the histories; but that having felt such a proof of it, I praised God that this had been in a person by whom I was so loved and whom I loved so dearly; and that this would serve me as an example, to play this same part in my turn.

He interrupted me to beg me to use it in this way, and to show in action that the talks we had had together during our health had been not merely borne in our mouths but deeply engraved on heart and in soul, in such a way as to be put into execution on the first occasions that offered; adding that this was the true object of our studies, and of philosophy. And, taking me by the hand, he said: "My brother, my friend, I assure you that I have done many things in my life, it seems to me, with as much pain and difficulty as I do this. And when all is said, I had been prepared for it for a very long time and had known my lesson all by heart. But have I not lived enough up to my present age? I was soon to be thirty-three. God granted me this grace, that all my life up to now has been full of health and happiness. In view of the inconstancy of things human, that could hardly last any longer. Henceforth it would have been time to get down to business and to see a thousand unpleasant things, like the disadvantages of old age, of which by this means I am quit. And then it is likely that up to this time I have lived with more simplicity and less malice than I would perhaps have done if God had let me live until the concern with getting rich and improving my affairs came into my head. As for me, I am certain that I am going away to find God and the abode of the blessed." And because I showed, especially in my face, that I could hardly bear to hear him, he said to me: "What,

my brother, do you want to put fear into me? If I felt fear, who but you should take it away from me?"

In the evening, when the notary arrived who had been sent for to receive his will, I had him put it in writing, and then asked Monsieur de La Boétie whether he did not want to sign it. "Not sign it," said he, "I want to make it myself. But, my brother, I would like to be given a little leisure, for I find myself extremely weary and so weak that I can hardly do a thing more." I started to change the subject, but he recovered himself suddenly and said to me that it did not take much leisure to die, and asked me to find out whether the notary had a good swift hand, for he would not make many stops in dictating. I called the notary, and on the spot he dictated his will so fast that it was very hard for the man to follow him. And when he had finished he asked me to read it to him, and, speaking to me, he said: "That's a fine thing we care for, our riches! *Sunt haec quae hominibus vocantur bona.*"[11] After the will had been signed, since his room was full of people, he asked me if it would do him any harm to talk. I told him no, but that he should speak very softly.

Then he sent for Mademoiselle de Saint-Quentin, his niece, and spoke to her thus: "My niece, my dear, since I have known you[12] I have always thought I could see shining in you some traits of a very fine nature; but these last services that you perform with such kind affection and such diligence in my present hour of need show me great promise in you; and truly I am obliged to you for this and thank you for it most affectionately. For the rest, for the discharge of my conscience, I admonish you to be first of all devout toward God. For without a doubt that is the main part of our duty, without which no other action can be either good or fine; and if that part is really sincere, it draws after it necessarily all other virtuous actions. After God, you must love and honor your father and mother, especially your mother, my sister, whom I esteem one of the best and most sensible women in the world; and I beg you to take from her the example of your life. Do not let yourself be carried away by pleasures. Flee like the plague those mad intimacies in which you sometimes see women indulge with men. For even though at the beginning these may have nothing bad about them, yet little by little

11 "Those are the things that by men are called good" (author unknown).

12 La Boétie addresses his niece, a young girl, as *tu*. He uses *vous* to all the others, and they to him.

they corrupt the mind and lead it to idleness, and beyond, into the ugly mire of vice. Believe me, the surest guardian of a girl's chastity is austerity. I pray you and want you to remember me because you often had before your eyes the affection I have borne you, but not to complain and grieve over my loss; and this I forbid to all my friends as much as I can, since it would seem that they were envious of the good which, thanks to my death, I shall soon find myself enjoying. And I assure you, my dear girl, that if at this moment God gave me a choice either to return and live on or to finish the journey I have begun, I would have a very hard time choosing. Farewell, my dear niece."

After that he sent for Mademoiselle d'Arsac, his stepdaughter, and said to her: "My daughter, you have no great need of my advice, having such a mother, whom I have found so wise and so well suited to my nature and my wishes, and who has never failed me in anything. You will be very well instructed by such a schoolmistress. And do not think it strange if I, who am not at all related to you by blood, care and am concerned about you. For since you are the daughter of a person who is so close to me, it is impossible that whatever concerns you should not concern me too. And therefore I have always shown fully as much concern for the affairs of Monsieur d'Arsac, your brother, as for my own. And perhaps it will not hurt your advancement that you have been my stepdaughter. You have wealth and beauty enough, you are a gentlewoman of good family. All you need is to add to these the riches of the mind, which I beg you to be willing to do. I do not forbid you the vice that is so detestable in women, for I refuse even to think that it can come into your mind – indeed I believe the very name of it is horrible to you. Farewell, my stepdaughter."

The whole room was full of wails and tears, which nevertheless did not interrupt the train of his speeches, which were a little long. But after all this he ordered everyone to leave except his "garrison," as he called the girls who served him. And then, calling my brother Beauregard,[13] he said to him: "Monsieur de Beauregard, I thank you very much for the trouble you are taking for me. Allow

13 Thomas de Montaigne, seigneur de Beauregard, second in age in his generation to Michel, born on May 17, 1534. Soon after the death of La Boétie he was married, for the second time, to La Boétie's stepdaughter, Jacquette d'Arsac, whom we have just met. He thus became lord of Arsac, Lilhan, Loirac, and Castera.

me to reveal something I have in my heart to tell you." When my brother had encouraged him, he went on thus: "I swear to you that of all those who have set about the reformation of the Church, I have never thought there was a single one who went about it with better zeal and more complete, sincere, and simple affection than you. And I certainly believe that it was only the vices of our prelates, which without a doubt need great correction, and certain imperfections that the course of time has brought into our Church, that incited you to this. I do not want to dissuade you from it now; for I do not readily ask anyone to do anything whatever against his conscience. But I do want to advise you, out of respect for the good reputation that the family you belong to has acquired by continual concord – a family that is as dear to me as any family in the world: Lord, what a family! from which there never has come any act other than that of a worthy man – out of respect for the will of your father, that good father to whom you owe so much, the will of your good uncle, and your brothers, to avoid these extremes. Do not be so sharp and so violent; accommodate yourself to them. Do not form a band and body apart; unite with them. You see how many ruins these dissensions have brought into this kingdom, and I warrant you they will bring much greater ones yet. And since you are wise and good, keep from bringing these disturbances into the midst of your family, for fear of making it lose the glory and the happiness that it has enjoyed until this hour. Take what I say to you about this in good part, Monsieur de Beauregard, and as a sure testimony of the friendship I bear you. For that is the reason I have held back until now from saying this to you. And perhaps because I say it to you in the state in which you see me, you will give more authority and weight to my words." My brother thanked him very heartily.

On Monday morning he was so ill that he had lost all hope of life, so that as soon as he saw me, he called me very piteously and said to me: "My brother, have you no compassion for all the torments I suffer? Don't you see that from now on all the help you give me serves only to prolong my pain?" Soon after this he fainted, so that they nearly gave him up for lost. Finally they revived him with vinegar and wine. But he could not see for a long time after, and, hearing us lament around him, he said to us: "My Lord, who is tormenting me so? Why do they take me out of that great pleasant rest that I am in? Leave me alone, I beg you." And then, hearing my voice, he said to me: "So you too, my brother, do not want me to be cured. Oh, what bliss you are making me lose!" Finally, having

recovered still further, he asked for a little wine. And then, feeling better for it, he said to me that it was the best drink in the world. "Surely no," said I to get him talking, "water is that." "You're quite right," he replied, "ὕδωρ ἄριστον."[14] All his extremities, even his face, were already icy with cold, with a death sweat that ran down all along his body; and hardly any sign of a pulse could be detected any longer.

That morning he made confession to his priest; but the priest, because he had not brought everything he needed, could not say Mass to him. But on Tuesday morning Monsieur de La Boétie asked for him, to help him, he said, to perform his last duty as a Christian. Thus he heard Mass and received the Sacrament. And as the priest was taking leave of him, he said to him: "My spiritual father, I humbly entreat you all, both you and those who are under your charge, pray God for me – if it is ordered by the most sacred rolls of God's plans that I am now to end my days – that he have pity on my soul, and forgive me my sins, which are infinite, since it is not possible that so vile and base a creature as I can have carried out the commands of so lofty and powerful a master. Or, if it seems to him that there is still need of me here below, and he wants to reserve me for some other time, beg him to put a quick end to the anguish I suffer, and to grant me the grace to guide my steps henceforth according to his will, and to make me better than I have been."

At this point he stopped a bit to catch his breath; and seeing that the priest was going away, he called him back and said to him: "I want to say this also in your presence: I protest that as I have been baptized, as I have lived, so I want to die in the faith and religion which Moses first planted in Egypt, which the patriarchs then received in Judea, and which, from hand to hand, in the progress of time, has been brought into France." To look at him, it seemed that he would have talked even longer if he could have; but he stopped, begging his uncle and me to pray God for him. "For these," he said, "are the best services that Christians can do for one another." In speaking, he had uncovered one shoulder, and he asked his uncle to cover it up again, although he had a servant nearer to him. And then, looking at me, he said: "*Ingenui est cui multum debeas, ei plurimum velle debere.*"[15]

14 "Water is the best" (Pindar).

15 "It is the part of a noble mind to want to owe more to the man to whom we owe much" (Cicero).

Monsieur de Belot[16] came to see him after noon. Giving him his hand, he said to him: "My good friend, I was here on the point of paying my debt, but I have found a good creditor who has remitted it for me." A little later, as he woke with a start: "All right! All right! Let it come when it will, I'm waiting for it, strong and firm of foot" – words that he repeated two or three times during his illness. And then, as they were forcibly opening his mouth to make him swallow, he said, turning to Monsieur de Belot: "*An vivere tanti est?*"[17]

In the evening he began really to look like death; and as I was supping he had me called, having nothing left but the likeness and shadow of a man, and, as he said about himself, *non homo, sed species hominis.*[18] And he said to me, with great difficulty: "My brother, my friend, please God I may see in reality what I have just seen in imagination!"

After waiting for a time while he no longer spoke but uttered piercing sighs in trying to speak (for from then on his tongue was beginning stubbornly to refuse to do its work), I said: "What are these visions, my brother?" "Great, great," he replied. "It never happened," I went on, "that I did not have the honor of sharing in all the ideas that came into your mind. Don't you want me to enjoy this honor still?" "Certainly I do," he replied, "but, my brother, I cannot express them: they are marvelous, infinite, and ineffable." We left it at that, for he could go no further. Thus a little earlier he had wanted to speak to his wife, and had told her, with the gayest face that he could put on, that he had a story to tell her. And he seemed to try to speak, but, his strength failing him, he asked for a little wine to restore it. It was to no avail, for he suddenly fainted, and for a long time could not see.

Being already very close to his death, and hearing the lamentations of Madame de La Boétie, he called her and spoke to her thus: "My likeness, you are tormenting yourself before it is time; won't you have pity on me? Take courage. Surely more than half

16 Jean de Belot, also a counselor in the Parlement of Bordeaux and a mutual friend. La Boétie had addressed one Latin satire to him and Montaigne (as against two to Montaigne alone) expressing the wish to flee the evil Old World for the New. In December 1567, Montaigne wrote him a letter to warn the Parlement of Protestant movements near Montaigne.

17 "Is it so great a thing to be alive?" The source of this quotation has not been found. Montaigne later quotes it in the *Essays* (III: 13, p. 1014).

18 "Not a man, but the semblance of a man" (author unknown).

the pain I bear is for the evil I see you suffer, not for my own; and with reason; for it is not properly we ourselves who feel the ills that we feel within us, but certain senses that God has placed in us; whereas what we feel for others we feel by certain judgment and the faculty of reason. But I am going off." This he said because his heart was failing him. Then, fearing that he had alarmed his wife, he recovered himself and said: "I am going off to sleep. Good night, my wife, go now." That was the last leave he took of her.

After she had gone, he said to me: "My brother, stay close to me, please." And then, feeling either the pangs of death sharper and more pressing, or the force of some hot medicine that they had made him swallow, he spoke in a louder and stronger voice, and tossed in his bed with the greatest violence; so that all the company began to have some hope, for until then it was weakness alone that had made us fear to lose him. Then, among other things, he began to entreat me again and again with extreme affection to give him a place; so that I was afraid that his judgment was shaken. Even when I had remonstrated with him very gently that he was letting the illness carry him away and that these were not the words of a man in his sound mind, he did not give in at first and repeated even more strongly: "My brother, my brother, do *you* refuse me a place?" This until he forced me to convince him by reason and tell him that since he was breathing and speaking and had a body, consequently he had his place. "True, true," he answered me then, "I have one, but it is not the one I need; and then when all is said, I have no being left." "God will give you a better one very soon," said I. "Would that I were there already," he replied. "For three days now I have been straining to leave."

In this distress he often called me simply to know whether I was near him. Finally he began to rest a little, which confirmed us still more in our good hope; so that on leaving his room, I rejoiced at this with Madame de La Boétie. But an hour later, or thereabouts, speaking my name once or twice and then heaving a great sigh to himself, he gave up the ghost, at about three o'clock on the Wednesday morning, August 18th, 1563, after living 32 years, 9 months, and 17 days . . .

3. *To His Father:* DEDICATION OF MONTAIGNE'S TRANSLATION OF SEBOND

[June 18, 1568]

To Monseigneur de Montaigne[19]

Sir, in carrying out the task you set me last year at your home at Montaigne, I have cut out and trimmed with my own hand for Raymond Sebond, that great Spanish theologian and philosopher, a costume in the French style, and have stripped him, as well as I could, of that wild bearing and barbaric demeanor that you saw in him at first; so that in my opinion he has enough style and *savoir-faire* to present himself in any good company. It may well be that delicate and fastidious persons will note here some Gascon trait and habit; but it will be the more to their shame for having by their carelessness let a man get ahead of them in this who is a complete novice and apprentice at such a task.

Now, sir, it is right that he should come to the light of day, and progress in favor, under your name, since to you he owes all the improvement and correction he has here. However, I clearly see that if you are pleased to have a reckoning with him, it will be you that will owe him much in the end. For in exchange for his excellent and very religious arguments, his lofty and as it were divine conceptions, it will turn out that you for your part have brought to him only words and language: a merchandise so vulgar and so vile that the more of it a man has, the less, peradventure, he is worth.

Sir, I pray God to give you a very long and very happy life.
Your very humble and very obedient son.
From Paris, June 18th, 1568.

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

19 Montaigne had translated Sebond's *Liber Creaturarum, sive Theologia Naturalis*, as *Théologie naturelle*, at his father's request. In the early pages of his "Apology for Raymond Sebond" (*Essays* II: 12, pp. 387–9) he speaks in a very deprecatory way of the work and suggests that he did the thousand-page translation in a few days. The letter above is dated from Paris on the very day his father died.

4. *To Henri de Mesmes:* DEDICATORY EPISTLE TO LA BOÉTIE'S TRANSLATION OF PLUTARCH'S "RULES OF MARRIAGE"

[April 30, 1570]

To Monsieur de Mesmes, Lord of Roissi and Malassise, Councillor to the King in his Privy Council[20]

Sir, one of the most notable follies that men commit is to employ the strength of their understanding to smash and ruin common and accepted opinions which bring us satisfaction and contentment. For whereas everything under heaven employs the means and instruments that nature has placed in its hands for their proper use, the profit and advantage of its own being, these people – in order to seem to have a livelier and more alert mind, one that receives and lodges in it nothing that is not tested and weighed a thousand times by the subtlest powers of reason – stir up their soul out of a peaceful and restful posture in order in the end to fill it, after a long quest, with doubt, uneasiness, and feverishness. It is not without reason that childlikeness and simplicity have been so recommended by truth itself.[21] For my part I prefer to be more at ease and less able, more happy and less understanding.

That is why, sir, although the clever ones make fun of our concern for what will happen here after us, since our soul will be lodged elsewhere and no longer affected by things here below, yet I think it is a great consolation to the frailty and brevity of this life to believe that it can be strengthened and prolonged by reputation and renown, and I very willingly embrace an opinion so pleasant and favorable, which is inborn in us, without anxiously inquiring how or why this can be.

So that, having loved above all else the late Monsieur de La Boétie, the greatest man of our time, in my opinion, I would think I was grossly failing in my duty if I wittingly let a name as rich as his and a memory so worthy of commendation vanish and be lost, and if I did not try, by those same parts of him, to revive him and

20 Henri de Mesmes (1532–96), seigneur de Roissi et de Malassise, chancellor of the kingdom of Navarre, eminent jurist, public servant, and patron of letters.

21 That is, by the Bible. Montaigne's anti-Protestant argument here anticipates those in the "Apology for Raymond Sebond" (*Essays* II: 12).

bring him back to life. I do believe that he has some sense of this and that these services of mine affect him and give him joy. In truth, he is still lodged in me so entire and so alive that I cannot believe he is either so irrevocably buried or so totally removed from our communication.

Now, sir, because each new revelation I give of him and of his name is just that much of a multiplication of this second life of his, and, moreover, because his name is ennobled and honored by the place that receives it, it is up to me not only to spread it as much as I possibly can, but also to entrust it to the keeping of honorable and virtuous persons. Among these persons you hold such a rank that in order to give you an occasion to take in this new guest and give him a warm welcome, I have decided to present you with this little work, not for any service that you might derive from it, for I know well that you have no need of an interpreter in order to frequent Plutarch and his companions; but it is possible that Madame de Roissi,[22] seeing the order of her household and of your fine concord represented here to the life, will be very pleased to learn that the goodness of her natural inclination has not only attained but surpassed all that the wisest philosophers have been able to conceive about the duty and laws of marriage. And, at all events, it will always be an honor to me to be able to do anything that proves a pleasure to you or yours, because of the obligation I have to render you service.

Sir, I pray God to give you a long and very happy life.
From Montaigne, April 30th, 1570.
Your humble servant,

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

22 Jeanne Hennequin, third cousin of her husband, married to him since 1552.

5. *To Michel de L'Hôpital:* DEDICATORY EPISTLE TO LA BOÉTIE'S LATIN "POEMS"

[April 30, 1570]

To Monseigneur de L'Hôpital, Chancellor of France[23]

Sir, it is my opinion that you men into whose hands both fortune and reason have placed the government of the world's affairs seek nothing more assiduously than a way to attain a knowledge of the men in the public offices under you. For there is hardly any community so sickly as not to have plenty of men in it to supply each of its offices adequately, provided that the selection and apportionment could be justly made. And if that point were gained, nothing further would have to be done to attain the perfect composition of a state.

Now, the more desirable this is, the more difficult it is also, since your eyes can neither reach so far as to pick and choose among a multitude so great and so spread out, nor penetrate to the depths of men's hearts to see their intentions and their conscience, the main parts to be considered; so that there has never been a commonwealth so well established that we did not often observe in it a weakness in this choice and this apportionment. And in those in which ignorance and malice, disguise, favors, intrigues, and violence are in command, if some selection is made according to order and merit, we doubtless owe this to fortune, which, by the inconstancy of its varied movement, has for once found itself in the path of reason.[24]

Sir, this consideration has often consoled me, for I know that Monsieur Etienne de La Boétie, one of the men most fit and needed for the highest offices in France, lived all his life, stagnating and underrated, by the ashes of his hearth at home, to the great detriment of our commonwealth; for as regards himself, I tell you, sir, that he was so abundantly furnished with the goods and treasures which defy fortune that never did a man live more satisfied or more content. To be sure, I know that he rose to those local dignities that are considered great; and I also know that never did a man bring to them more ability, and that at the age of thirty-two, when he died, he had acquired more true reputation on that level than any man

23 Michel de L'Hôpital (1503–73), a great moderate statesman, chancellor of France since 1560, had resigned in 1568 in protest at the prevalence of violence and corruption. He was a fine Latin poet and patron of poetry.

24 This last clause is virtually the title of one of the *Essays* (I: 34).

before him. But the fact remains that it is unreasonable to leave a worthy captain in the status of common soldier, and to employ in modest positions those who would also do well in the highest. In truth, his powers were put to poor and insufficient use; so that, beyond the needs of his office, he had many great talents left over, idle and useless, from which the commonwealth could have derived service, and he himself glory.

Now, sir, since he was so careless about pushing himself into the public eye (for unfortunately virtue and ambition rarely dwell together), and since he belonged to an age so thick-witted or so full of envy that he could not be aided at all by the testimony of others, I am prodigiously eager that at least his memory after him, to which alone from now on I owe the good offices of our friendship, should receive the reward of his merit and be well lodged in the good opinion of honorable and virtuous persons.

For this reason I have wanted to place him in the public eye and to present him to you, sir, by these few Latin verses that he left us; in the opposite way from the mason, who places the handsomest part of his building toward the street, and the merchant, who makes a show and display of the richest sample of his wares. What was most commendable in him, the true juice and marrow of his worth, has followed him, and all we have left is the bark and the leaves. The man who could bring out the disciplined movements of his soul, his piety, his virtue, his justice, the liveliness of his mind, the weight and soundness of his judgment, the loftiness of his conceptions, so far elevated above those of the vulgar, his learning, the graces that were ordinary companions of his actions, the tender love he bore to his wretched country, and his mortal and sworn hatred of every vice, but especially of that ugly traffic that is hatched under the honorable name of justice – that man would certainly engender in all good men a singular affection for him, mingled with a prodigious regret for his loss. But, sir, this is far beyond my powers, and moreover he never thought of leaving any evidence to posterity even of the fruit of his studies; and all we have left is what he wrote upon occasion by way of pastime.

Be that as it may, I beg you, sir, to give him a friendly reception, and – as our judgment often infers something very great from something trivial, and as the very sports of great personages reveal to the clear-sighted some honorable mark of the rank from which they come – to rise through this work of his to the knowledge of him, and consequently to love and embrace his name and his

memory. In so doing, sir, you will only be making return in kind for the very decided opinion he had of your virtue, and thus you will be accomplishing what he infinitely desired during his life. For there was not a man in the world in whose acquaintance and friendship he would rather have been lodged than in yours.

But if anyone is scandalized at my making such bold use of another's property, I tell him that no spoken or written statement in the schools of philosophy ever represented the rights and duties of sacred friendship as exactly as did the practice that my friend and I formed together.

For the rest, sir, this slight present, to kill two birds with one stone, will also serve, if you please, as testimony of the honor and reverence that I have for your ability and for the unique qualities that are within you. As for those that are external and fortuitous, it is not my way to place them in account.

Sir, I pray God to give you a long and very happy life.
From Montaigne, April 30th, 1570.
Your humble and obedient servant,

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

6. *Notice to the Reader of La Boétie's Translations*

[August 10, 1570]

NOTICE TO THE READER[25]

Reader, you owe to me all that you enjoy of the late Monsieur Etienne de La Boétie; for I tell you that for his own part, there is nothing here that he would ever have hoped to show you, or indeed that he considered worthy of bearing his name in public. But I, who am not so high-handed, finding nothing else in his library, which he left me in his will, still did not want this to be lost. And from what little judgment I have, I am hopeful that you will find that the very ablest men of our time very often make much ado about slighter things than this. I understand from those who knew him younger than I did, for our acquaintance began only about six years[26] before

25 Because the undated letter to Lansac (No. 7) preceded this in the volume in which they were published, Armaingaud infers that it was composed later.

26 In his chapter "Of Friendship" (I: 28, p. 174) Montaigne speaks of the friendship as lasting four years; he had earlier written "four or five years."

his death, that he had written many other Latin and French verses, as for example under the name of Gironde, and I have heard him recite some rich bits of these. Indeed, the man who wrote "The Antiquities of Bourges"[27] quotes some which I recognize. But I do not know what has happened to them all, or to his Greek poems. And in truth, as each sally came into his head, he discharged it on the first piece of paper that came to hand, with no further care for preserving it.

Be assured that I have done what I could, and that in the seven years since we lost him I have been able to recover only what you see here, except for a "Discourse on Voluntary Servitude" and some Memoirs concerning our troubles over the Edict of January 1562.[28] But as for these last two pieces, I find their fashion too delicate and elegant to abandon them to the gross and heavy air of so unpleasant a season. Farewell.

From Paris, August 10th, 1570.

7. *To Louis de Lansac:* DEDICATORY EPISTLE TO LA BOÉTIE'S TRANSLATION OF XENOPHON'S "OECONOMICUS"

[1570(?)]

To Monsieur de Lansac, Knight of the Order of the King, Councillor in his Privy Council, Superintendent of his Finances, and Captain of a hundred gentlemen of his household[29]

Sir, I send you the "Oeconomicus"[30] of Xenophon, put into French by the late Monsieur de La Boétie: a present that has seemed

27 Jean Chaumeau, who quotes some of La Boétie's verses in his "History of Berry" (Lyons, 1566).

28 Montaigne had intended to publish the "Discourse on Voluntary Servitude" in his chapter "Of Friendship," but changed his mind presumably when it appeared in a Protestant publication. See *Essays* I: 28, p. 175 and note 2.

The "Memoir on the Edict of January 1562" was a judicious but firm criticism of the government's policy of tolerance and compromise, which Montaigne presumably did not publish in order not to add fuel to the fires of civil hatred. It was published in book form by Paul Bonnefon in 1922.

29 Louis de Saint-Gelais, seigneur de Lansac or Lanssac (1512–89), eminent adviser and tutor to royalty, ambassador, and financial administrator. He had many dealings with the Parlement of Bordeaux while Montaigne was a member of that body. For his son Guy, see note 113 (Letter 29).

30 Treatise on household management.

to me well suited to you, both because it sprang originally, as you know, from the hand of a notable gentleman, a very great man in both war and peace, and because it received its second form from this person, whom I know you loved and esteemed while he lived. This will always serve you as a spur to continue your good opinion and good will toward his name and his memory. And to speak boldly, sir, do not be afraid to find your good feeling for him somewhat increased; for since your taste of him has been only from the public evidence he gave of himself, it is my duty to assure you that he had so many degrees of ability beyond this that you are very far from having known him whole and entire.

When he was alive, he did me the honor, which I count among my greatest good fortunes, of forming with me a bond of friendship so close and tight-knit that there was no slant, impulse, or motive in his soul that I was not able to consider and judge, at least unless my vision at times fell short. Now, without prevarication, taken all in all, he was so nearly a miracle that in order not to fly beyond the limits of plausibility and be completely disbelieved, I am obliged, in speaking of him, to restrain myself and say far less good than I know about him. And for the moment, sir, I will be content merely to entreat you, for the honor and reverence that you owe to the truth, to believe and bear witness that our Guienne has never come near seeing anything like him among the men of his robe.[31]

So, in the hope that you will render him this, which is very justly his due, and in order to bring him more freshly into your memory, I give you this book, which at the same time will also warrant you, for my part, that if my lack of ability did not expressly forbid me, I would be just as eager to present you with something of my own in recognition of my obligations to you and of the ancient favor and friendship that you have borne to the members of our family. But, sir, for lack of better coin, I offer you in payment a very steadfast will to do you humble service.

Sir, I pray God to maintain you in his keeping.
Your obedient servant,

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

31 Men of the long robe, that is, of the legal profession.

8. *To Paul de Foix*: DEDICATORY EPISTLE TO LA BOÉTIE'S "FRENCH VERSES"

[September 1, 1570]

To Monsieur de Foix, Councillor to the King in his Privy Council and Ambassador from His Majesty to the Signory of Venice[32]

Sir, since I am in a position to recommend, to you and to posterity, the memory of the late Etienne de La Boétie, both for his extreme worth and for the singular affection that he bore me, it has occurred to me that it shows a very consequential lack of discrimination, deserving the constraint of our laws, to go about, as is commonly done, robbing virtue of glory, its faithful companion, and making a present of glory, without discrimination or judgment, to the first comer, according to our private interests; seeing that the two principal reins that guide us and keep us to our duty are punishment and reward, which concern us directly and as men only by means of honor and shame, inasmuch as these go directly to the soul and are sensed only by the inward feelings that are most our own; whereas even the animals are seen to be somewhat susceptible to all other, corporal kinds of reward and punishment. Besides, it is well to see that the custom of praising even the virtue of those who are no longer alive is not directed to them, but aims by this means to spur the living to imitate them, just as the ultimate punishments are employed by justice more for an example than for the correction of those who suffer them. Now since praise and dispraise correspond with each other and have consequences so comparable in importance, it is hard to justify the fact that our laws forbid us to damage the reputation of others and nevertheless allow us to ennoble it undeservedly. This pernicious license thus to toss to the winds as we wish the praises of one and all was once restrained in various ways in other places. Indeed it may have helped to put poetry in the bad graces of the sages. Be that as it may, at least there is no hiding the fact that the vice of lying always appears most unbecoming to a wellborn man, whatever face we put upon it.

32 Paul de Foix (1528–84), long a counselor at the Parlement of Paris, in disfavor for a time under Henry II for his relative moderation, later an eminent public servant, adviser to Charles IX and Henry III, archbishop of Toulouse. A serious student of law and of letters, he was a good friend to Montaigne, who lamented his death in the *Essays* (III: 9, p. 888).

As for this person I am speaking to you about, sir, he sends me far outside these conditions; for the danger is not that I may lend him some quality but that I may deprive him of some. And his bad luck will have it that whereas he has provided me, as well as a man can do, with very just and very manifest occasions for praise, I have just as little means and ability to render him his due – I indeed, to whom alone he communicated himself to the life, and who alone can vouch for a million graces, perfections, and virtues which molded idle in the midst of so fair a soul owing to the ingratitude of his fortune. For since the nature of things has allowed, I know not how, that however beautiful and acceptable truth may be of itself, yet we embrace it only if it is infused and insinuated into our belief by the instruments of persuasion, I find myself so very destitute both of the credit that might give authority to my simple testimony and of the eloquence to enrich it and set it off well, that I have come very close to giving up this whole effort, for I have not even anything of his left by which I can worthily present to the world so much as his mind and his learning.

In truth, sir, having been surprised by his destiny in the flower of his age and in a state of very happy and very vigorous health, he had never given less thought to anything than to publishing works that should testify to posterity what sort of a man he was in this respect. And perhaps he was strong enough, if he had thought about it, not to care very much about it. But finally I decided that it would be much more excusable for him to have buried with himself so many rare favors of heaven than it would be for me to bury also the knowledge he had given me of them. And therefore, having assiduously collected everything complete that I found among his notebooks and papers scattered here and there, the playthings of the wind and of his studies, I thought best, whatever it was, to distribute and divide it up into as many parts as I could, in order thereby to take the occasion to commend his memory to all the more people, choosing the most notable and worthy persons of my acquaintance, and those whose testimony might be the most honorable to him; like you, sir, who may have had some knowledge of your own of him during his life, but certainly too slight to reveal how great was his full worth. Posterity may believe me if it please, but I swear to it upon all the conscience I have that I knew and saw him to be such, all things considered, that even in desire and imagination I could hardly reach beyond, so far am I from assigning him many equals.

I very humbly entreat you, sir, to assume the general protection not only of his name but also of these ten or twelve French poems,

which cast themselves, as if out of necessity, under the shelter of your favor. For I will not conceal from you the fact that their publication was deferred after the rest of his works because up there[33] they did not consider them polished enough to be displayed to the public eye. You, sir, will see what the truth of the matter is. And because it seems that this judgment of theirs affects the interest of all this part of the country, from which they think nothing in the vernacular can come that does not have a wild and barbarous flavor, it is properly your responsibility – you who, to the eminence of a member of the first family of Guienne, which you received from your ancestors, have added on your own also the highest eminence in every sort of ability – to maintain, not only by your example but also by the authority of your testimony, that this is not always the case. And although doing is more natural to Gascons than saying, still they sometimes perform exploits with their tongue as much as with their arm, and with their mind as much as with their heart.

For my part, sir, it is not my quarry to judge of such things; but I have heard experts in learned matters say not only that these verses are worthy to appear on display, but that if you stop to consider the beauty and richness of the invention, they are in subject matter as meaty, full, and marrowy as any that have yet been seen in our language. Naturally each workman feels himself strongest in one certain part of his art, and the most fortunate are those who have seized upon the noblest part; for not all the pieces that are equally necessary to the construction of a building are therefore equally to be prized. Elegance of language, sweetness, and polish may perhaps shine more brightly in a few others; but in nobility of imagination, in the number of sallies, conceits, and nice touches, I do not think that any others surpass these. And moreover it should also be taken into account that this was neither his occupation nor his study, and that he hardly put his hand to his pen once a year, witness the little we have left from his whole life. For you see, sir, unseasoned and dry, all of his poetry that has come into my hands, without selection or choice, so that there is even some from his boyhood. In short, it seems as though he put his hand to it only to show that he was capable of doing anything. For as to the rest, thousands and thousands of times, even in his ordinary remarks, we have seen things come from him that were more worthy of being known, more worthy of being admired.

33 In Paris, where La Boétie's works were being published. Montaigne, after publishing the first lot, was writing this dedication from his château.

This, sir, is what reason and affection, joined together by a rare coincidence, command me to say to you about this great and good man; and if the liberty I have taken in addressing myself to you and talking to you so long about this offends you, please remember that the principal effect of greatness and eminence is to make you a target for the importunateness and involvement of other people's affairs.

Hereupon, after placing my very humble affection at your disposal, I pray God, sir, to give you a long and very happy life.

From Montaigne, September 1st, 1570.

Your obedient servant,

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

9. *To His Wife:* DEDICATORY EPISTLE TO LA BOÉTIE'S TRANSLATION OF PLUTARCH'S "LETTER OF CONSOLATION TO HIS WIFE"

[September 10, 1570]

To Madame de Montaigne, my wife

My wife, you understand very well that it is not the act of a gallant man, according to the rules of the present day, still to pay court and show affection to you. For they say that an intelligent man may well take a wife, but that to espouse her is for a fool to do.

Let us let them talk. For my part I hold to the simple ways of the old days – as indeed my hair is beginning to show. And in truth innovation[34] has been costing this poor state so dear up to now (and yet I do not know if the bidding will not go still higher), that in every way and every place I give it up. You and me, my wife, let us live in the old French way.

Now you may remember how the late Monsieur de La Boétie, that dear brother and inviolable companion of mine, gave me as he was dying his papers and his books, which have since been the most treasured adornment of my library. I do not want stingily to enjoy them all alone, nor do I deserve that they should be useful only to me. For that reason I have wished to communicate them to my friends. And because I have, so I believe, none more intimate than you, I send you Plutarch's "Letter of Consolation to His Wife,"

34 Protestantism.

translated by my friend into French. Indeed I am sorry that fortune has made this present so appropriate for you, and that having no child but a long-awaited daughter after four years of marriage, you had to lose her in the second year of her life.[35]

But I leave to Plutarch the charge of consoling you and advising you of your duty in this, begging you to believe him for my sake. For he will reveal to you my views, and what can be said in this matter, much better than I could myself.

With this, my wife, I commend myself very strongly to your good graces, and pray God to maintain you in his keeping.

From Paris, September 10th, 1570.

Your good husband,

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

10. *To the Jurats of Bordeaux*

[May 21, 1582]

To Messieurs the Jurats of the City of Bordeaux

Gentlemen, I hope that Monsieur de Cursol's[36] trip will be of some help to the city at this time when it has in hand such a just and favorable cause. You have put all possible order into the affairs that came up. Things being in such a good state, I beg you to excuse for a little while longer my absence,[37] which I shall certainly cut short in so far as the pressure of my affairs may permit. I hope it will be brief. Meanwhile please keep me in your good graces and command me if the occasion arises for you to employ me in the public service. Your Monsieur de Cursol has also written me and notified me of his trip.

I commend myself to you very humbly, gentlemen, and pray God to give you a long and happy life.

From Montaigne, May 21st, 1582.

Your humble brother and servant,

MONTAIGNE

35 This letter is dated about two weeks after the death of their first child, Thoinette, at about two months of age. Montaigne's "second year" may well be a printer's error. They had been married about five years.

36 One of the jurats, who formed a council of six working closely with the mayor.

37 Montaigne was in his first term as mayor of Bordeaux.

11. *To Marshal de Matignon*

[October 30, 1582]

To Monseigneur de Matignon,[38] Marshal of France

Sir, since the letter I wrote you three or four days ago, in which I told you among other things that I had received no letter from you during my absence and no command to come here, nothing new has happened. I have just this moment seen the general of the Cordeliers, Gonzaga,[39] who arrived yesterday; and if his fever, for which he was bled and treated, does not prevent him, he will leave tomorrow, he told me, to continue on his way toward Spain. He had letters for you from the King, but I think they were only to recommend him. I offered him for his convenience such little power as I have in this town.

Since Monsieur de Gourgues[40] has notified me that he was writing you, I have written this note in order very humbly to kiss your hands, praying God, sir, to give you a long and happy life.

From Bordeaux, October 30th, 1582.

Your very humble servant,

MONTAIGNE

12. *To Antoine Duprat*

[November 22, 1582]

To Monseigneur de Nantouillet,[41] Councillor to the King

Sir, you wish to know from me how the King should maintain the three checks by which absolute power is controlled. Here is my feeling.

38 Jacques II de Goyon, comte de Matignon (1525–97), sire de Lesparre, prince de Mortagne, baron de Saint-Lô, marquis de Lonray, marshal of France, Montaigne's future successor as mayor of Bordeaux, at this time lieutenant-general in Guienne for Henry III. As this and the other fifteen letters to him show, Montaigne worked closely with him to defend the King's rights and keep the peace in the divided southwest of France.

39 Francisco Gonzaga, general of the Cordeliers (Friars Minor) from 1579 to 1587, later bishop of Cefalù (Sicily) and still later bishop of Mantua. He died in 1620.

40 Ogier de Gourgues, seigneur de Montlezun, vicomte de Juillac, baron de Vayres, treasurer-general of French finances in Guienne, who died in 1594. Montaigne speaks of him again in Letter 29.

41 The same Antoine Duprat, seigneur de Nantouillet, to whom Letter 1 was addressed.

First, concerning the three checks that I spoke to you about in my previous letter, by which the absolute power of the prince and monarch, which is called tyrannical when used contrary to reason, is curbed and civilized and thus reputed just, tolerable, and aristocratic: I say again that the King can do nothing more agreeable, more pleasant, and more profitable to his subjects, or more honorable and laudable for himself, than to maintain the said three things, by which he acquires the name of good king, very Christian, father of the people, and well loved, and all the other titles that a valiant and glorious prince can acquire. Such is my complaint and my opinion.

With this, sir, I pray God to give you health and a good and long life.

November 22nd, 1582.

Your servant,

MONTAIGNE

13. *To King Henry III:* LETTER OF REMONSTRANCE FROM THE MAYOR AND JURATS OF BORDEAUX

[August 31, 1583]

To the King

Sire,

The mayor and jurats, governors of your city and town of Bordeaux, very humbly remonstrate to you that now and earlier, both for themselves and for the inhabitants of the seneschalsy of Guienne, who are all your very humble and natural subjects, they have voiced at great length to the lord commissioners, Your Majesty's deputies to the region and duchy of Guienne, their plaints and grievances concerning the burdens and surcharges that they have suffered and do suffer daily, about which they are confident that Your Majesty, using your royal and paternal kindness and inclination, will make provision so wisely and with such equity that the universal repose of this kingdom and relief of its inhabitants will ensue.

However, inasmuch as since the departure of the said lord commissioners, new circumstances and calamities have come upon the great mass of the people, and as experience, mistress of events, has made known more clearly how pernicious are innovations in

all states, may it please Your Majesty to take it in good part that the said mayor and jurats, in adding to their said first remonstrances and grievances, hereby present to you in all humility certain articles concerning the good of your service and the relief of your subjects, so that by the same means they may receive the benefit and alleviation that you may be pleased to impart to them out of your clemency and mercy, to which alone, after God, they have recourse.

And in the first place, although by the ordinances of Your Majesty, both ancient and modern, in conformity with reason, all impositions must be made equally upon all persons, the strong supporting the weak, and although it is most reasonable that those who have the greater means should feel the burden more than those who live only precariously and by the sweat of their body; yet it has happened, for some years back and especially this year, that as regards the taxes that have been imposed by your authority, besides the *taillon*[42] and property taxes and the wages of the presidial courts – those for the paying off of the export duties, for subvention, the repair of the Cordouan Tower,[43] the payment of the chamber of justice, the expenses of the army in Portugal, and the suppression of the elect,[44] as well as taxes remaining from previous years – the richest and most opulent families of the said city have been exempt from all these because of the privilege claimed by all the officers of justice and their widows, the officers of your finances and of elections, vice-seneschals, lieutenants, officers of the vice-seneschalsy, domestic officers of Your Majesty and of the king and queen of Navarre, officers of the chancellery, of the mint, and of the artillery, untaxable soldiers of the castles and provisioners of these; and besides these, by decree of your court of the Parlement solemnly pronounced on the sixth day of April of the current year, all the children of the presidents and counselors of the Parlement have been declared noble and not subject

42 A supplement to the taille, a personal tax.

43 A tower and lighthouse on the Garonne, built by the English in the fourteenth century and fallen into ruin. Henry III appointed the engineer Louis de Foix in 1581 to study the question of its repair, ordered money raised a year later, and on January 16, 1583, named Montaigne, the treasurer Ogier de Gourgues (see Letter 11), and François de Nesmond, president of the Parlement of Bordeaux, to constitute a commission for the repair of the tower.

44 Presumably ironic: keeping the Protestants in line.

to any tax; so that henceforth when it is appropriate to impose some sort of tax, it will have to be borne by the least and poorest group of the inhabitants of the cities, which is quite impossible, unless suitable remedies are provided against this by Your Majesty, as the said mayor and jurats very humbly request you to do.

May it please Your Majesty also to consider that although most of the sums destined for the repair of the Cordouan Tower have been raised and placed in the hands of your receiver-general, nevertheless there has not been a finger lifted for this repair nor provision made for preparing for it, as necessity required. And inasmuch as the money destined to this end might be employed elsewhere, to the great detriment of the public, may it please Your Majesty to ordain that restraining orders be given to the lord treasurers-general and aforementioned receivers to prevent their disposing of the said sums or using them elsewhere than for the purpose for which they are destined, to wit, for the said repair, whatever the other cause or occasion; and to order also that the ruling set forth by these letters-patent of Your Majesty about the distribution of the said moneys – to wit, that it shall be made by one of the lord presidents of the court of the Parlement, one of the said lord treasurers, and the mayor of the said city or in his absence one of the said jurats – be maintained and observed according to its form and tenor. And nevertheless, so that trade shall not be slowed up and your revenue diminished, may it please you to provide that the said repair shall be started according to the means that you have been pleased to establish.

By the privileges granted by the Very Christian Kings to the said city and confirmed not long ago by Your Majesty, the cognizance of, and provision for, the masterships of all artisans and the enforcement of the said statutes, which are registered in the said city, belongs to the said mayor and jurats, who have had this cognizance peacefully and without contradiction for all time, up to the present; and likewise, by the same instrument, that of the setting up of sworn keepers of taverns and public houses,[45] established as a corporation

45 There were 120 keepers of taverns and public houses, appointed to this minor municipal office by the mayor and jurats, in return for a sum of money. They were authorized to sell all the wine grown by the citizens of Bordeaux before any wine from anywhere else could be sold. Wine was the most important source of the city's revenue.

to sell wine in the said city, so that they form one of the main parts of the city's fiscal domain. Nevertheless, some people, desiring to reintroduce complete disorder and confusion among the artisans and make the city and its inhabitants lose their freedom to sell wine, which is their sole revenue, and without which they cannot bear the burdens ordained by Your Majesty, have managed to obtain edicts making the said masterships venal, and with them the freedom to sell wine, by establishing new groups of keepers of taverns and public houses; which is directly contrary to the tenor of the said privileges, confirmed not long ago by Your Majesty, and contrary to the express declaration of Your Majesty, granted in favor of the said mayor and jurats on behalf of the said tavern keepers, on December 21st, 1556, confirmed in your court of the Parlement. This would amount to the total ruin and overthrow of the said inhabitants, unless by your kindness provision is made, and unless the said edicts, obtained presumably by circumvention and heavy pressure, are revoked and nullified, as the said mayor and jurats and inhabitants very humbly request and entreat that they be.

As kings rule by justice and all states are maintained by it, so it is necessary that it be administered gratuitously and with as little burden on the people as possible. Your said Majesty, knowing this full well, and wishing to cut off the source of the main trouble, has by your very sacred edict forbidden all venality in judiciary offices. However, through the fault of the times, the multiplicity of offices has persisted, by which the poor people is very greatly burdened, especially in that for a year now the court clerks in the said city and seneschalsy have been established with a title of office and an increase in salary. And whereas at the beginning there seemed little likelihood of great harm to the public welfare, yet it has been learned since, and is seen every day, that this is one of the greatest burdens and surcharges on the poor people that it has suffered for some time. For what used to cost only one sou now costs two, and for one court clerk that you had to pay you have to pay three, to wit, the clerk, the assistant clerk, and the assistant clerk's clerk; with the result that the poor, not having the means to meet so many expenses, are most often constrained to abandon the pursuit of their rights; or, what should be used to support their families or to meet public necessities is by this means paid out to assuage the ambition of certain private persons, to the detriment of the public.

As for the disputes that have come up between the said mayor and jurats and the captains of the castles of this your city[46] over the matter of guards and watches and their usurpation of certain places belonging to the said city, Monsieur de Matignon, marshal of France, has sent Your Majesty the record of the whole investigation that has been made into this, by which the justice of the cause of the said mayor and jurats is clearly established. And because this affair is still undecided, and the delay is prejudicial to the good of your service and the rights that you have been pleased for all time to preserve in the said city, may it please Your said Majesty as soon as possible to give a ruling between the parties so that in the future each one shall freely perform what belongs to its charge and functions, and all things shall be restored to their first and former state, without damage to your sovereign authority or to the rights and prerogatives of your city.

And inasmuch as the misery of the time has been so great since the misfortune of the civil wars that many persons of both sexes and all ranks are reduced to begging, so that all you see in the towns and the fields is a frantic multitude of poor people – which would not happen if the edict made by the late King Charles, of happy memory, whom God absolve, were maintained: stating that each parish would be required to feed its poor, without their being allowed to roam elsewhere – for this reason, in order to remedy this disorder and the troubles that come of it daily, may it please Your Majesty to order that the said edict, which has been confirmed in your courts of Parlement, be strictly maintained and observed, with the injunction to all seneschals and local judges to lend a hand to its observation; and further, that the priors and administrators of hospitals (which are mostly of royal foundation) that are dedicated to the feeding of pilgrims going to Santiago de Compostela or other shrines, be constrained, on pain of seizure of their properties, to feed and shelter the said pilgrims for the time provided by the said foundation, so that the pilgrims shall not be constrained to go begging through the town, as is done every day, to the great scandal of everyone.

Your Majesty is very humbly entreated to receive in good part the

46 Merville, captain of the Château du Hâ in Bordeaux, was Montaigne's vehement and conniving but unsuccessful rival for the mayoralty in 1583. Vaillac (see note 116, Letter 30), a Leaguer, was in command of the other castle in the town, the Château Trompette.

aforesaid remonstrances which the said mayor and jurats, performing the duty of their charges and offices, present to you with all humility, being moved by no other zeal than that of the good of your service and the commiseration we must have for the poor populace, which, while awaiting relief from these burdensome woes – relief so much hoped for, and promised by Your Majesty – is perpetually in prayer for your prosperity and the increase of your state; and we are firmly resolved, the people and ourselves, to employ our goods and the little means we have left in your service and in keeping your city obedient to Your Majesty.

Done in Bordeaux, in council of the jurats, the last day of August, 1583.

MONTAIGNE, DALESME, GALOPIN, PIERRE RÉGNIER, DE LAPEYRE, CLAVEAU.

14. *To King Henry of Navarre:* LETTER OF REMONSTRANCE FROM THE MAYOR AND JURATS OF BORDEAUX[47]

[December 10, 1583]

This is what Messieurs de Montaigne, mayor, and de Lurbe,[48] attorney and syndic, of the city of Bordeaux are delegated and commissioned to say in remonstrance to the king of Navarre, lieutenant-general of the King in the region and duchy of Guienne, for the welfare of His Majesty's service and the relief of his subjects.

They will remonstrate to the said lord, king of Navarre, that provinces and cities cannot be maintained and preserved in good condition without freedom of commerce, which, by the free communication with each other, causes all things to abound in them; and by this means the plowman feeds and supports his family by the sale of his crops, the merchant traffics in wares, and the artisan finds a price for his work, all this to support public taxes. And since the principal commerce of the inhabitants of this city is carried on with the inhabitants of Toulouse and other towns situated on the Garonne, not only in the matter of wheat, wines, pastels, and fish, but also in wool; and since the said mayor and jurats have been informed

47 This letter explains the mission related in the following one (No. 15).

48 Gabriel de Lurbe (died 1613), a jurat, attorney and syndic of Bordeaux, author of the *Chronique bourdeloise* (1619).

by a general report that the people of the Mas-de-Verdun[49] are resolved, on the pretext of default in payments to the garrisons of the places of surety granted by the edict of pacification, to stop the boats loaded with merchandise going both up and down the said river Garonne, which would mean the total ruin of this region:[50]

The said lord, king of Navarre, shall be entreated not to allow the said boats and merchandise to be stopped either at the said Mas-de-Verdun or at other towns under his government, but to preserve and maintain freedom of commerce between all persons, in accordance with the edicts of the King.

Done in Bordeaux, in council of the jurats, the 10th of December, 1583.

MONTAIGNE, DALESME, GALOPIN, PIERRE RÉGNIER, DE LURBE, CLAVEAU, DE LAPEYRE.

15. *To Marshal de Matignon*

[December 14, 1583]

To Monseigneur de Matignon, Marshal of France, in Bordeaux

Sir, I arrived yesterday evening in this town with Monsieur de Clervant,[51] who turned up at Roquefort as I was dining, and we

49 See note 52 (Letter 15).

50 One copy or draft of this letter adds the following paragraphs at this point:

"Likewise, because the poor populace is so afflicted by the miseries of the past that it is virtually reduced to the depths of despair, and moreover because the six years' truce destined for the maintenance of the said towns of surety has expired, the said lord, king of Navarre, will be entreated to intervene with the King our sovereign lord so that henceforth the poor populace may be rid of the burden of paying the garrisons of the said towns of surety, which has been particularly oppressive to the inhabitants of the seneschalsy of Guienne who are of the third estate.

"Finally, and in consequence of the above, the said lord, king of Navarre, will be entreated to intervene with the King our lord so that the salaries of the lords of the Chamber of High Justice now at Périgueux may henceforth not be levied on the poor populace, which alone has borne this mass of surcharges for two years, which was the time set for the formation of the said Chamber; and it is not possible that the poor inhabitants of the said city can continue in the future to pay the said salaries, as they have done mainly so as not to interrupt the progress of the edict of pacification."

51 Claude-Antoine de Vienne, seigneur de Clervant, a counselor and

made the rest of the trip together. He had gone the wrong way, thinking to find the king of Navarre in Foix, and passed through Limoges and Périgueux.

Yesterday I did reverence to this prince. For the first attempt, we did not come away with much hope in the matter of your request. He wants to use all possible means to be paid.[52] We shall see tomorrow whether we can bring him down a bit.

Monsieur de Lavardin[53] leaves here today to go home; he told me that he would write you. Our ears are filled with Bazas.[54] Monsieur de Birague[55] left yesterday morning. I shall be here as short a time as I can.

Sir, I very humbly kiss your hands and pray God to have you in his keeping.

From Mont-de-Marsan, December 14th, 1583.

Your very humble servant,

MONTAIGNE

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frequent negotiator for Henry of Navarre, who was then returning to his king from a mission to Henry III with the latter's instructions to work for a reconciliation between Navarre and his wife, Margaret of Valois. Roquefort is a little town about sixty miles south of Bordeaux and fifteen miles northeast of Mont-de-Marsan on the road between the two.

52 The prince, of course, is Navarre. The previous letter explains the problem. Bordeaux was complaining that Protestant troops in the Mas-de-Verdun, a small stronghold on the Garonne near Montauban, were intercepting boats bringing needed wheat from Toulouse. Navarre replied that his soldiers in the towns of surety were unpaid and hungry, and that the Bordeaux people would have to talk to those who were withholding the pay due his soldiers.

53 Jean de Beaumanoir, marquis de Lavardin (1551–1614), an officer and negotiator for Navarre, later (1595) marshal of France.

54 In reprisal for Navarre's seizure of Mont-de-Marsan, Matignon had occupied Bazas for the king of France. Philippe de Mornay, known as Duplessis-Mornay (1549–1623), a leading adviser to Henry of Navarre, wrote five letters to Montaigne that are still extant between November 9, 1583, and January 25, 1584, and mentioned a letter from Navarre himself to Montaigne, seeking to explain and justify their action to him and through him to Catholic men of good will. Navarre, though Protestant, was a loyalist, and his claims to succession were supported by Henry III.

55 Charles de Birague, called Captain Sacremore (died 1587), bastard son of Ludovic de Birague, governor of the marquisate of Saluzzo, King's lieutenant-general in Italy.

16. *To Marshal de Matignon*

[January 21, 1584]

To Marshal de Matignon

Sir, the people of this region who had gone to meet the king of Navarre have been back for two days. I have not seen them, but they have returned with only peaceful inclinations, as I wrote you. There is nothing new except a general and extraordinary assembly of many ministers, which will take place Monday at Sainte-Foy-la-Grande.[56] If a large company of people of various sorts and sexes comes in here tomorrow, as I expect, I will let you know what I learn.

I very humbly kiss your hands, praying God, sir, to give you a long and happy life.

From Montaigne, January 21st, 1584.

Your very humble servant,

MONTAIGNE

17. *To Claude Dupuy*

[April 23, 1584(?)]

To Monsieur Dupuy,[57] Counselor of the King in His Court of the Parlement of Paris, at Saintes

Sir, the action of the prisoner, the sieur de Verres, which is very well known to me, deserves that you bring to bear in judging it your natural mildness, if there is a case in the world in which you may justly bring it to bear. He did a thing not only excusable according to the military laws of our time, but necessary, and in our judgment laudable. And without a doubt he did it under great pressure and reluctantly. There is nothing to reproach in the rest of the course of his life.[58]

I entreat you, sir, to give it your attention: you will find that his deed appears such as I am representing it to you, and his prosecution for it is more malicious than the act itself. If this can also serve his

56 A Protestant town on the Dordogne about ten miles east of Montaigne.

57 Claude Dupuy (1545–94) was a member of a special court of justice sent to Bordeaux in 1582 by Henry III. At the time of this letter it was in session at Saintes, about sixty-five miles north of Bordeaux.

58 The sieur de Verres has not been identified.

case, I will tell you that he is a man brought up in my house, related to many worthy families, and, above all, one who has always lived honorably and innocently. He is a very good friend of mine. By saving him you will put me under extreme obligation. I entreat you very humbly to accept this recommendation on his behalf, and, after kissing your hands, I pray God, sir, to give you a long and happy life.

From Castera,[59] April 23rd.

Your affectionate servant,

MONTAIGNE

18. *To Marshal de Matignon*

[July 12, 1584(?)]

To Monseigneur de Matignon, Marshal of France, at Bordeaux

Sir, I have just now received yours of the 6th, and I very humbly thank you for showing a sort of sign, by the command you give me to come back to you, that you do not find my assistance disagreeable. This is the greatest benefit that I can expect from this public office of mine, and I hope to go to see you on my first day there.

All I can tell you meanwhile is that Messieurs Duplessis and de Quitry[60] and their large family left Sainte-Foy-la-Grande yesterday morning. The ladies and retinue whom they are conducting will lengthen their return to the king of Navarre.

You already know that at their interview at the baths of Encausse, Monsieur d'Epernon[61] resolved to go to Bagnères and see His Majesty on the 10th of this month at Pau, where they can confer in greater privacy. I believe that the king of Navarre will indeed see him again at the said Pau on his return from Bagnères,

59 Castera is a small place in Médoc near the left bank of the Gironde about thirty miles north-northwest of Bordeaux. It belonged to Montaigne's brother Thomas de Beauregard (see note 13, Letter 2).

The year is not given in this letter, but most editors agree on 1584.

60 For Duplessis, see note 54 (Letter 15). Jean de Chaumont, seigneur de Quitry, was counselor and gentleman of the chamber to the duke of Alençon and was later to be lieutenant-general of the King's armies.

61 Henry III, when the death of his last brother made Henry of Navarre the legitimate heir to the French throne, sent one of his favorites, Jean-Louis, duc d'Epernon (1554–1642), to urge Navarre to abjure his Protestantism. Navarre finally refused. Encausse-les-Thermes and Bagnères-de-Luchon are mineral baths near the Spanish border. "His Majesty" is Henry of Navarre.

and I do not know whether meanwhile he will be able to make a trip to Nérac. He is fully occupied in digesting the request, which is being made him by the people of the low country, to take the place of Monsieur[62] as protector of their interests, which they have reason to hope are prospering. I have no doubt that the queen of Navarre is likewise having her share of these visitations.

While waiting for an early opportunity to kiss your hands, I shall say no more, except that I pray God, sir, to give you a long and happy life.

From Montaigne, July 12th.

Your very humble servant,

MONTAIGNE

19. *To Marshal de Matignon*

[August 19, 1584]

To Marshal de Matignon

Sir, I see nothing here worthy of your notice. However, feeling justified by the favors you show me and the intimacy you grant me with you, I make bold to write you this note merely to inform you of my health, which has improved a little from the change of air.

I came here in a single stretch, which is quite long. Near my house I found that some good people of the Reformation from Sainte-Foy-la-Grande had killed a poor tailor with fifty or sixty stabs with scissors, for no other reason than to rob him of twenty sous and a coat worth about twice that.

I very humbly kiss your hands and pray God, sir, to give you a very happy and long life.

From Montaigne, August 19th, 1584.

Your very humble servant,

MONTAIGNE

62 "Monsieur" is the duke of Anjou, last brother of Henry III, whose recent death (June 10, 1584), had made Navarre heir to the throne. The "people of the low country" are the Protestants of lower Guienne, to the north.

20. *To the Jurats of Bordeaux*

[December 10, 1584]

To Messieurs the Jurats of the City of Bordeaux

Gentlemen, I have received your letter and will see about going to see you as soon as I can. This whole court of Sainte-Foy-la-Grande[63] is on my hands, and they have come to see me by appointment. When this is over, I shall be more at liberty.

I send you the letters from Monsieur de Vallées,[64] which you can decide about. My presence would add nothing but some of the irresolution and uncertainty of my choice and opinion on this matter.

With this I humbly commend myself to your good graces and pray God, gentlemen, to give you a long and happy life.

From Montaigne, December 10th, 1584.

Your humble brother and servant,

MONTAIGNE

21. *To Marshal de Matignon*

[January 18, 1585]

To Marshal de Matignon

Sir, on the strength of several accounts that Monsieur de Bissouse[65] has given me, on behalf of Monseigneur de Turenne,[66] of his judgment of you and of the confidence this prince has in my advice (though I do not build much on courtly phrases), I decided at dinnertime to write to Monseigneur de Turenne, to this effect:

63 Henry of Navarre and his court came to Montaigne for the first time on December 19 to spend two days. In his copy of Beuther's *Ephemeris Historica* Montaigne notes that Navarre slept in the same bed with him and was served entirely by Montaigne's servants.

64 Monsieur de Vallées has not been identified. Some editors read "Vallier."

65 The text reads "Bissonse," and some editors take this to be Antoine de Belsunce. It seems more likely to be Raymond de Bissouse (or Vissouse, Vysouze, or Viçoze), financial secretary to Henry of Navarre, one of those who visited Montaigne on December 19, 1584.

66 Henri de La Tour d'Auvergne, vicomte de Turenne (1555–1623), duke of Bouillon and prince of Sedan by virtue of his first marriage and father of the famous marshal by his second, was one of the principal followers of Navarre and another of those who had visited Montaigne the month before.

That I was saying good-bye to him by letter. That I had received the letter from the king of Navarre, who seemed to me to be taking good advice by trusting in the affection that you offered him to do him service. That I had written to Madame de Guissen[67] to make use of time to further her enterprise, and that I would urge you to assist in this. That I had advised her not to engage the interest and fortune of this prince in her passions, but, since she had so much power over him, to look more to his advantage than to her personal inclinations. That you were talking about going to Bayonne, where I might perhaps offer to follow you if I thought that my presence could be of even the slightest use to you. That if you went there, the king of Navarre, knowing you were so near, would do well to invite you to see his beautiful gardens at Pau.

That is exactly the substance of my letter, without any other haranguing. I am sending you the answer to it that was brought to me this evening. If I am not mistaken, from this beginning there will soon spring some scribbling. It seems to me that his letter already gives a certain impression of discontent or fear. Whatever he says, I have a hold on them at the place where they are going for more than two months, and where another sort of tone will be heard.

I beg you to send me back the enclosed letter with the other two. The bearer has no other business but your dispatch.

With this I very humbly kiss your hands and pray God, sir, to give you a long and happy life.

From Montaigne, January 18th, 1585.

Your very humble servant,

MONTAIGNE

67 Diane (better known as Corisande) d'Andoins, comtesse de Guiche (or Guissen) et de Gramont (1555–1621), mistress and adviser of Henry of Navarre. A letter of February 28, 1588, from the Spanish envoy in Paris to Philip II describes Montaigne as having great influence on the countess and as being a negotiator for Navarre with Henry III. This and other evidence suggests that Montaigne's influence on Navarre, both directly and through Corisande, may have been very important.

22. *To Marshal de Matignon*

[January 26, 1585]

To Marshal de Matignon

Sir, I have learned nothing since, although I have seen many people from this court[68] around here. I think that everyone has left, except that Monsieur du Ferrier[69] has remained to pay the servants' wages. If you would like to see a letter that the sieur Duplessis wrote me later, you will find in it that the reconciliation[70] was quite complete and full of good understanding; and I think that his master confided in him about this more intimately than in the others, knowing that this course is to his liking, as well as to that of Monsieur de Clervant,[71] who has seen you since. If I am to accompany you to Bayonne, I would like you to stick to your plan of waiting until Lent, so that I can take the waters at the same time. Incidentally, I have learned that there is nothing so distasteful to the husband as to see people on terms of good understanding with the wife.[72]

I have had news that the jurats reached a safe haven; and I very humbly kiss your hands, praying God, sir, to give you a long and happy life.

From Montaigne, January 26th, 1585.

Your very humble servant,

MONTAIGNE

Sir, you do me a great favor by welcoming the affection I show for your service, and you may be sure you have acquired no affection in Guienne that is more purely and sincerely yours; but this is a small acquisition. If you should have to give up your position, it must not be at a time when anyone can boast of having taken it away from you.

68 The court of Navarre.

69 This is the same Arnaud du Ferrier (1506–85) whom Montaigne had met (and suspected of Protestant leanings) on his Italian trip in Venice, where du Ferrier was the French ambassador. See *Travel Journal*, pp. 1121–2.

70 The reconciliation between the king of Navarre and his wife, Margaret of Valois. For Duplessis, see note 54 (Letter 15). "His master" is of course Henry of Navarre.

71 See note 51 (Letter 15).

72 The king and queen of Navarre.

23. *To Marshal de Matignon*

[February 2, 1585]

To Marshal de Matignon

Sir, the man by whom I sent you lately a letter of mine and one from Monsieur Duplessis has not yet returned. Since then I hear from Le Fleix[73] that Messieurs du Ferrier and de La Marsillière[74] are still at Sainte-Foy-la-Grande, that the king of Navarre has just sent to fetch some remainder of his retinue and of his hunting crew that he had here, and that his stay in Béarn will be longer than he thought. Following some new and favorable information from Monsieur Roquelaure,[75] he is going back again toward Bayonne and Dax to show them that the King took in very good part the entry that Navarre made into these towns. That is what they tell me. The rest of the country remains peaceful, and there is nothing stirring.

Whereupon I very humbly kiss your hands and pray God, sir, to give you a long and happy life.

From Montaigne, February 2nd, 1585.

Your very humble servant,

MONTAIGNE

73 A little town on the Dordogne about ten miles east of Montaigne, home of Montaigne's friend and sponsor the marquis of Trans, and scene of the negotiations leading to the Treaty of Fleix (November 25, 1580) between Catholics and Protestants.

74 For Duplessis, see note 54 (Letter 15); for du Ferrier, note 69 (Letter 22). Hurosius Berziau, seigneur de La Marsillière, was a secretary of state of Navarre who was quartered with his king.

75 Antoine, seigneur de Roquelaure (c. 1544–1625), was a blithe, courageous, and very distinguished officer of Henry of Navarre. Later he was mayor of Bordeaux and still later marshal of France.

24. *To the Jurats of Bordeaux*

[February 8, 1585]

To Messieurs the Jurats of the City and Town of Bordeaux, at Bordeaux

Gentlemen, I have taken my good share of the contentment which you write me you derive from the successful expeditions that have been reported to you by your deputies, and I take it as a good omen that you have successfully made your way through the beginning of this year.

Hoping to rejoice with you over this at the first convenient opportunity, I very humbly commend myself to your good graces, and pray God, gentlemen, to give you a happy and long life.

From Montaigne, February 8th, 1585.

Your humble brother and servant,

MONTAIGNE

25. *To Marshal de Matignon*

[February 9, 1585]

To Marshal de Matignon

Sir, I hope that the stone which was bothering you lately when you wrote me has by now slipped out easily, like another that I voided at the same time.

If the jurats arrived in Bordeaux the day they were expected and came by the post, they may have brought you fresh news of the court. The rumor is current here that Ferrand[76] was seized three leagues away from Nérac on his way to the court and brought back to Pau; also that the Huguenots nearly took Taillebourg and Talmont[77] by surprise at the same time; also rumors of certain other plans for Dax and Bayonne.

On Tuesday, after a troop of vagabonds that has been roaming around here for a long time had bought the favor and help of

76 Ferrand was a man whom Margaret of Valois placed as a secretary with her husband and who was arrested while carrying letters from Margaret and others to Catherine de' Medici and others at the court of France. For more on this incident, see Letter 26.

77 Places in Charente-Maritime, some fifty to sixty miles north of Bordeaux.

a gentleman of the region called Le Borgne La Siguinie to help them to get the better of some vagabonds who belong to another troop across the river in the village of Gensac,[78] which belongs to the king of Navarre, the said La Siguinie, having assembled twenty or thirty of his friends under color of going duck hunting with harquebuses, together with two or three of the said vagabonds from this side of the river, went and attacked those on the other side and killed one. The authorities of Gensac, notified of this, armed the people and came and made an attack on the assailants, captured four, one gentleman and three others, and wounded three or four more. The rest withdrew to this side of the river. There are two or three of the Gensac people mortally wounded. The skirmish lasted a long time and was very hot. The matter is open to settlement, for there is much fault on both sides.

If the sieur de La Roque,[79] who is a very good friend of mine, absolutely must fight at Cabanac du Puch,[80] I hope it may be far from you, and so advise him.

Whereupon I very humbly kiss your hands and pray God, sir, to give you a long and happy life.

From Montaigne, February 9th, 1585.

Your very humble servant,

MONTAIGNE

Sir, I was closing my letter when I received yours of the 6th and the one from Monsieur de Villeroy[81] which you were pleased to send me (by a man whom the city corporation sent me) to notify me of the successful expedition of their deputies. The sieur de Lamothe[82] sends me word that he has things to tell me that cannot be written and that I should let him know whether it is necessary for him to

78 A village to the south of the Dordogne, about ten miles south-southeast of Montaigne. Le Borgne La Siguinie has not been identified; Le Borgne, which means "one-eyed man," may be a nickname.

79 An adviser on the side of Navarre, nephew of the Cardinal de Bourbon.

80 Presumably the château of Saint-Germain du Puch near Libourne, about fifteen miles east-northeast of Bordeaux, belonging to the Cabanac du Puch family.

81 Nicholas de Neuville, seigneur de Villeroy or Villeroi (1543–1617), first secretary of state under four successive kings: Charles IX, Henry III, Henry IV, and Louis XIII.

82 Baude, sieur de Moncuq, seigneur de Lamothe (or La Mothe or Lamotte), a jurat of Bordeaux. The deputies are presumably those mentioned in the preceding letter.

come and see me here. Just now I am making no reply. But as for the command that you are pleased to give me, to come to see you, I very humbly beg you to believe that there is nothing I would do more willingly; and I shall never cast myself back into solitude so far or unburden myself of public affairs so thoroughly as not to retain a singular devotion to your service and a fondness for being wherever you may be.

At the moment I have my boots on to go to Le Fleix, where the good President du Ferrier and the sieur de La Marsillière[83] are to be tomorrow with the intention of coming here the day after or Tuesday. I hope to come and kiss your hands some day next week, or let you know if some occurrence rightly prevents my coming. I have received no news from Béarn, but Poyferré,[84] who has been at Bordeaux, has written me, so I am told, and given the letter to a man from whom I have not yet received it. I am sorry for that.

26. *To Marshal de Matignon*

[February 12, 1585(?)]

To Marshal de Matignon

Sir, I have just arrived from Le Fleix. La Marsillière was there and others of that council. They say that since the Ferrand incident and because of it Frontenac[85] has come to Nérac. The queen of Navarre tells him that if she had thought that the king her husband was so curious, she would have had all her dispatches pass through his hands, and that what was found in the letter she wrote to the queen her mother, where she spoke of returning to France,[86] was

83 For Le Fleix, du Ferrier, and La Marsillière, see notes to Letters 22 and 23.

84 In the 1580–88 editions of the *Essays*, in a passage at the end of I: 28 that introduced I: 29, Montaigne spoke of a sieur de Poiferré who had known La Boétie long before Montaigne did and who found in his own home some sonnets by La Boétie and transmitted them to Montaigne for publication. A Maître Jean de Poyferré, attorney at the Parlement, took the oath of bourgeois of Bordeaux on January 16, 1554. It seems likely that this is the same man.

85 For Le Fleix, La Marsillière, Ferrand, and later du Ferrier, see notes to Letters 22, 23, and 25. Antoine de Buade, seigneur de Frontenac, one of Navarre's most trusted followers and friends, was in the group that visited Montaigne in December 1584.

86 That is, to the north of France.

as it were in asking for advice and deliberating, not as being resolved on it; and that she raised the question because of the small account that is taken of her, so obviously that everyone sees it and is fully aware of it. And Frontenac says that what the king of Navarre did was only because he had been led to suspect that Ferrand was bearing memoranda concerning his own state and his public affairs.

They say the principal result is that several letters from the girls of this court to their friends in France – I mean the letters that were saved; for they say that when Ferrand was taken he was able to throw some papers into the fire, and they were consumed before they could be pulled out – these remaining letters are causing a lot of laughs.

On my way back I saw Monsieur du Ferrier, sick, at Sainte-Foy-la-Grande. He is planning to come to see me some day this week; others will be here as soon as this evening. I do not expect him to come; and in view of his age, it seems to me I left him in bad condition. However, I shall wait for him, and unless you give me orders to the contrary, I shall for this reason put off my trip to see you until the beginning of the following week.

Whereupon, very humbly kissing your hands and praying God, sir, to give you a long and happy life,

from Montaigne, February 12th,

Your very humble servant,

MONTAIGNE

The said Ferrand had a thousand crowns on him – so they say; for all this information is rather uncertain.

27. *To Marshal de Matignon*

[February 13, 1585]

To Marshal de Matignon

Sir, Monsieur du Ferrier has just written me that the king of Navarre is due to go to Montauban. Hereabouts they are in a state of alarm about some troop of horsemen which they say is lodged on the other side of the river in Bazadois.[87] If I learn news about this before I close this letter I will notify you and send over there tonight. It may be the company of the king of Navarre assembling to make a show; I have some of their men-at-arms here who are going to go there.

87 The area around Bazas, to the south and east of Bordeaux, south and a little west of Montaigne. For du Ferrier, see Letter 22.

You will know about the rumors that are current in these quarters, from what the marquis de Trans[88] writes me.

I saw Poyferré's letter. There is nothing in it except that he had something to speak to me about on behalf of the ladies, something I needed to know; but that he could not write it or delay his departure.

Whereupon, hoping soon to have the good fortune of kissing your hands, I pray God, sir, to give you a long and happy life.

From Montaigne, February 13th, 1585.

Your very humble servant,

MONTAIGNE

Sir, I was forgetting to tell you that the prisoners who were held at Gensac, as I wrote you, are at liberty except for the attorney of the town of Montravel,[89] who was seized only by accident and because he was with the others; for he took no part in all this and had been on the spot on some errand in the execution of justice.

28. *To Marshal de Matignon*

[February 1585(?)][90]

To Marshal de Matignon

Sir, I have just now received this Sunday morning your two letters, pursuant to which I would be mounting my horse this very hour except that President d'Eymar,[91] who left here yesterday, has

88 Germain-Gaston de Foix, comte de Gurson et du Fleix, marquis de Trans, powerful friend and sponsor of Montaigne, probably instrumental in getting him elected mayor. Montaigne, a close friend of the entire family, twice comments on Trans in the late *Essays* without naming him: on his apparent indifference to the death of his three sons in the battle of Moncrabeau in 1587 (I: 14, p. 50) and on his tempestuous but ineffectual control of his household (II: 8, p. 346). For Poyferré, see Letter 25.

89 A little town on the north side of the Dordogne about two miles south of Montaigne. For the Gensac incident, see Letter 25.

90 The letter is undated, but seems clearly to have been written in late February, 1585.

91 President of the Parlement of Bordeaux. He was elected mayor in 1575, but his confirmation in office by Henry III was at first refused and then delayed because he was not of the military but of the legal nobility. He was succeeded by Biron as mayor in 1578.

my horses, which I expect this evening, with the hope of leaving tomorrow to go to see you. And being unable at the present period to make this trip from here to Bordeaux in one day, because of the floods everywhere, I shall go to spend the night at Faubrenet, near the port of Le Tourne,[92] in order to cross your path if you leave meanwhile; and I will be able to be at Podensac Tuesday morning to hear what you shall be pleased to command me. But unless by the bearer of this you change our assignation, I will go to meet you Tuesday at Bordeaux without crossing the river until La Bastide.[93]

The news I received from Pau on the 11th is that the king of Navarre was going away a few days later to the port of Bayonne, from there to Nérac, from Nérac to Bergerac, and then into Saintonge. Madame de Gramont[94] was still in very bad health.

Whereupon I very humbly kiss your hands and pray God, sir, to give you a very happy and long life.

Your very humble servant,

MONTAIGNE

29. *To Marshal de Matignon*

[May 22, 1585(?)]

To Marshal de Matignon

Sir, this morning I received your letter, which I communicated to Monsieur de Gourgues,[95] and we dined together at the house of Monseigneur de Bordeaux.[96] As for the difficulty of transporting the money mentioned in your memorandum, you see how hard

92 A village and port on the northeast bank of the Garonne about fifteen miles southeast of Bordeaux. Podensac is a little town on the southwest bank of the Garonne about twenty miles southeast of Bordeaux.

93 Then a town right across the Garonne from Bordeaux, now a part of the city.

94 Corisande d'Andoins, comtesse de Guiche et de Gramont. See note 67 (Letter 21).

95 See note 40 (Letter 11).

96 The text reads "Monsr de Bourdeaus." This may be one of Matignon's lieutenants named Bourdeaus or Bordeaux. It seems more likely, however, that it is Antoine Prévost de Sansac, the archbishop of Bordeaux from 1560 until his death in 1591, a zealous worker for his religion and his king. The following letter, written five days later, tells of Montaigne's looking in daily at the archbishop's palace.

a thing it is to take care of; however, we will keep our eye on it as closely as we can.

I made every effort to find the man you spoke to us about. He has not been here, and Monseigneur de Bordeaux shows a letter in which he states that he cannot come to meet the said sieur de Bordeaux as he planned, since he has been informed that you mistrust him. His letter is of the day before yesterday. If I had found him I would probably have followed the milder course, being uncertain of your resolution; but nevertheless I beg you to have no fear that I will refuse anything that you have resolved on, or that I will make any choice or distinction about the affair or the person, where your command is involved. I hope you have many people in Guienne whose wills are as much yours as mine is.

There is a rumor that the galleys from Nantes are coming toward Brouage.[97] Marshal de Biron[98] has not yet moved out. Those who had the task of notifying Monsieur d'Uza[99] say they could not find him, and I think he is no longer here, if indeed he has been here.

We are busy with our gates and guards, and are watching them a little more attentively now in your absence, which makes me fear not only for the preservation of this city but also for your own preservation, knowing that the enemies of the king's service are well enough aware of how necessary you are to it and how badly everything would go without you.

I fear that affairs will come upon you from so many sides in the region where you are that you will be busy a long time in taking care of everything and will have many and long difficulties. If anything new and important comes up, I will promptly dispatch to you a man especially to let you know of it; and you are to suppose that nothing is stirring if you have no news from me. I beg you also to consider that this sort of movement is usually so unexpected that if it should happen they will have me by the throat without giving me warning.

97 A town and port near the mouth of the Charente north of Bordeaux. It was Protestant and the galleys in question were Catholic.

98 Armand de Gontaut, seigneur de Biron (1524–92), marshal of France from 1577, whom Matignon had succeeded as lieutenant-general in Guienne, and Montaigne as mayor of Bordeaux. A Catholic, he later promptly recognized Henry IV as his king.

99 Presumably the same vicomte d'Uza who had fought under Monluc in 1562 and 1570 and held a naval command before La Rochelle in 1573, and whose family (de Lur d'Uza) much later intermarried with some of Montaigne's descendants.

I will do what I can to get news from all parts, and to that purpose will visit all sorts of men and see what their feeling is. Up to this moment nothing is stirring.

Monsieur Du Londel[100] saw me this morning and we looked into some arrangements for his place, where I shall go tomorrow morning.

Since I began this letter I learned at Les Chartrons[101] that near this town there passed two gentlemen who say they belong to Monsieur de Guise and who were coming from Agen.[102] I could not find out what route they took. People at Agen are waiting for you to come. The sieur de Mauvesin[103] came as far as Canteloup and then went back from there after learning some news. I am looking for a Captain Roux,[104] to whom Masparault[105] writes to draw him into his service with plenty of promises.

The news of the two galleys from Nantes, ready to descend upon Brouage with two companies of foot soldiers, is certain. Monsieur de Mercœur[106] is in the city of Nantes. The sieur de La Courbe[107] told President Nesmond[108] that Monsieur d'Elbeuf[109] is on this side of

100 Le Londel or Du Londel Auctoville, trusty captain of Matignon's guards, who in April 1585 had assisted Matignon in the arrest of the League Vaillac and the seizure from him of the dangerous Château Trompette in Bordeaux. It is presumably the Château Trompette that Montaigne refers to as "his place."

101 Les Chartrons or Les Chartreux, the northern edge of Bordeaux, on the river.

102 Margaret of Valois was then at Agen and involved in an intrigue with the League, the party of the Guises.

103 Michel de Castillon, sieur de Mauvesin, one of Navarre's captains. Canteloup is a village about six miles south of Bordeaux.

104 Captain Roux was a Catholic career soldier fighting for Navarre. A year later he stoutly defended Puynormand against the League armies during the siege of Castillon. He became a good friend of Montaigne's and was married at his château in 1589.

105 Pierre de Masparault, member of the privy council of Henry III and Master of Requests.

106 Philippe-Emmanuel de Lorraine, duke of Mercœur (1558–1602), one of the leaders of the League.

107 The sieur de La Courbe has not yet been identified.

108 François de Nesmond (died 1616), councillor in the King's privy council, president of the Parlement of Bordeaux.

109 Charles I, duc d'Elbeuf or d'Elbœuf (1556–1605), grandson of Claude de Guise and a general for the League.

Angers and stayed with his father, and that he is coming toward lower Poitou with four thousand foot and four or five hundred horse, after collecting the forces of Monsieur de Brissac[110] and others; Monsieur de Mercœur is to join them. The rumor is also current that Monsieur de Mayenne[111] is coming to take the troops that have been assembled for them in Auvergne and that he will come through the Forez mountain region to Rouergue[112] and to us, that is to say, toward the king of Navarre, against whom all this is coming.

Monsieur de Lansac[113] is at Bourg[114] and has two armed ships with him. His responsibility is for naval matters.

I am telling you what I hear, and mingling the news of town rumors which I do not consider likely with truths, so that you may know everything; very humbly entreating you to come back as soon as your affairs will allow; and I assure you that we will meanwhile spare neither our labors, nor, if necessary, our life, to keep everything in obedience to the King.

Sir, I very humbly kiss your hands and pray God to have you in his keeping.

From Bordeaux, Wednesday night, May 22nd.

Your very humble servant,

MONTAIGNE

I have seen no one from the king of Navarre. They say that Monsieur de Biron has seen him.

110 Charles II de Cossé, seigneur de Brissac (1550–1621), a Leaguer fighting for Henry III, who was later to turn over Paris to Henry IV, and still later became marshal of France.

111 The text reads "Monsieur du Meine," and some editors interpret it as the duke of Maine. It seems, however, that the reference must be to Charles de Lorraine, duke of Mayenne (1554–1611), one of the League's top generals and its leader after the death of Henri de Guise, who was soon to lead these forces in besieging Castillon.

112 The modern department of Aveyron.

113 Guy de Lansac or Lanssac (c. 1547–1622), known as "young Lansac," son of a favorite adviser of Catherine de' Medici (see note 29, Letter 7), a predecessor of Montaigne as mayor of Bordeaux. At this point he was pillaging and ransoming river traffic on behalf of the League. Matignon soon after attacked him and drove him out.

114 A port about ten miles north of Bordeaux near the confluence of the Dordogne and the Garonne.

30. *To Marshal de Matignon*

[May 27, 1585]

To Marshal de Matignon

Sir, I wrote you at great length these past days. I send you two letters I have received for you by the hand of one of Monsieur de Rouillac's[115] men. The proximity of Monsieur de Vaillac[116] fills us with alarms, and there is not a day that does not bring me fifty urgent ones. We very humbly entreat you to come here just as soon as your affairs may permit. I have spent every night either around the town in arms or outside of town at the port, and before your warning I had already kept watch there one night on the news of a boat loaded with armed men which was due to pass. We saw nothing; and the evening before last we were there until after midnight, and Monsieur de Gourgues[117] was there; but nothing came. I made use of Captain Saintes,[118] for I needed our own soldiers. He and Massip[119] filled the three coaches for the guard inside the city. I hope you will find the city in the state in which you left it in our hands. This morning I am sending two jurats to notify the court of the Parlement of all the rumors that are current and of the obviously suspect men whom we know to be there.

Whereupon, hoping that you may be here tomorrow at the latest, I very humbly kiss your hands and pray God, sir, to give you a long and happy life.

From Bordeaux, May 27th, 1585.

Your very humble servant,

MONTAIGNE

115 Monsieur de Rouillac is not clearly identified. One editor conjectures that he is Monsieur de Raillac, seigneur de Saint-Mezard, a follower of Navarre.

116 Louis Ricard Gourdon de Genouillac, baron de Vaillac, the Leaguer who had commanded the Château Trompette in Bordeaux until Matignon ousted and arrested him. Released so that he might go and justify himself to the King, he had remained near Bordeaux and was stirring up trouble.

117 See note 40 (Letter 11).

118 Military commander of Cahors, then on detached duty at Bordeaux, a man highly esteemed by Matignon.

119 The text reads Massep. This is probably the same Massip, a counselor at the Parlement of Bordeaux, who in 1587 was sent by the Parlement to look into some troubles at Saint-Emilion, since he held property near there.

Not a day has passed that I have not been to the Château Trompette. You will find the platform made. I look in at the archbishop's[120] palace every day, too.

31. *To the Jurats of Bordeaux*

[July 30, 1585]

To Messieurs the Jurats of the City of Bordeaux

Gentlemen, I found news of you here by chance, which the marshal[121] communicated to me. I will spare neither my life nor anything else for your service and will leave you to judge whether the service I can render you by my presence at the coming election is worth my risking going into the city in view of the bad condition it is in, especially for people coming from as pure an air as I do.[122] On Wednesday I will come as close to you as I can, to Feuillas[123] if the disease has not reached there; at which place, as I am writing to Monsieur de Lamothe,[124] I shall be very happy to have the honor of seeing some one of you to receive your commands and to discharge myself of the credentials that the lord marshal will give me for the company.

Whereupon I very humbly commend myself to your good graces and pray God, gentlemen, to give you a long and happy life.

From Libourne, July 30th, 1585.

Your humble servant and brother,

MONTAIGNE

120 See note 96 (Letter 29).

121 Matignon.

122 During one of Montaigne's many and busy absences, the plague had struck Bordeaux with the greatest violence. From June to December, 1585, 14,000 inhabitants died, or almost half the population. Only two jurats out of six remained in town; most of the inhabitants left. People from outside were forbidden to enter. Montaigne's action has been much criticized, especially in the nineteenth century, when this letter was discovered; but none of his contemporaries, as far as is known, were critical.

123 A château just across the river from Bordeaux, just south of La Bastide, between Cenon and Floirac.

124 See note 82 (Letter 25).

32. *To the Jurats of Bordeaux*

[July 31, 1585]

To Messieurs the Jurats of the City and Town of Bordeaux

Gentlemen, I communicated to the lord marshal[125] the letter you sent me and what the bearer told me you had commissioned him to make me understand; and the marshal commissioned me to ask you to send him the drummer[126] that was at Bourg on your behalf. He also told me that he asks you to send him Captains Saint-Aulaye and Mathelin[127] immediately, and to get together the largest number of mariners and sailors that can be found.

As for that bad example and the injustice of taking women and children prisoners, I do not at all think that we should imitate it as others have done. I have said this also to the said lord marshal, who has instructed me to write you not to make a move in this matter until you have fuller word.

Whereupon I very humbly commend myself to your good graces, and pray God, gentlemen, to give you a long and happy life.

From Feuillas,[128] July 31st, 1585.

Your humble brother and servant,

MONTAIGNE

33. *To Marshal de Matignon*

[June 12, 1587(?)]

To Marshal de Matignon

Sir, Madame de Mauriac is arranging the marriage of her son the sieur de Mauriac[129] to one of the sisters of Monsieur d'Aubeterre.

125 Matignon.

126 Or drum. The French *tambour* could mean either. For Bourg, see note 114 (Letter 29).

127 Captains Saint-Aulaye and Mathelin have not been identified.

128 See note 123 (Letter 31).

129 Madame de Mauriac was born Jeanne de Ségur and in 1556 married Antoine de Taillefer, seigneur de Mauriac. Her mother was a La Chassaigne, as was Montaigne's wife. Her son Isaac de Taillefer, seigneur de Mauriac, a Protestant, was born in 1564; he married Isabeau Bouchard d'Aubeterre, daughter of François and Gabrielle d'Aubeterre, on August 28, 1587.

Things are so far advanced, so they tell me, that all that remains to be arranged is the presence of her eldest daughter, Madame de Brigneux, who is at Lectoure[130] with her husband. She very humbly entreats you to grant a passport to her said daughter with her small train of servants to come to Mauriac; and since I am a relative of hers and have the honor of being known to you, she wanted me to make the request of you, and has sent me a letter which she says is from Monsieur d'Aubeterre, I think for this same purpose.

I do make you this very humble and affectionate request, if it is a thing that does not displease or bother you. If not, at least this letter will serve to recall me to your memory, from which I may have been dislodged both by my scant merit and by the long time it has been since I had the honor of seeing you. I am,

from Montaigne, June 12th,

Sir, your very humble servant,

MONTAIGNE

34. *To Marshal de Matignon*

[February 16, 1588(?)]

To Marshal de Matignon[131]

Sir, you have learned that our baggage was seized before our eyes in the forest of Villebois,[132] and then, after a long time and much confused discussion, the seizure was judged unjust by His Highness the prince.[133] Meanwhile we did not dare go on, because of uncertainty over our personal security, about which we were to be enlightened in writing on our passports. This raid was occasioned by

130 A small town in the department of Gers, on the river Gers, about twenty miles south of Agen. Anne de Taillefer's second marriage was to Jacques, seigneur de Brigneux, governor of Lectoure for Navarre.

131 In the essay "Of Physiognomy" (III: 12, pp. 990–91), Montaigne tells of a holdup in many ways so similar to this one that many readers have thought it was the same one. This one apparently occurred on the road to Paris, where, among other things, he was going to have the first three-book edition of the *Essays* published.

132 On the road to Paris, a little south of Angoulême.

133 Presumably Henri I, prince de Condé, who died a month later. But if so, since Condé was a Protestant leader, why does Montaigne blame a Leaguer? The best explanation seems to be that this was a Protestant reprisal for the seizure by the Leaguer referred to later.

the same Leaguer who had seized Monsieur de Barrault[134] and Monsieur de La Rochefoucauld.[135] The tempest fell upon me, who had my money in my strongbox. I have not recovered any of it, and most of my papers and clothes also remained with the men. We did not see His Highness. I lost fifty-odd crowns, and the count of Thorigny[136] lost a silver water pitcher and some odds and ends of clothes. He turned out of his way in great haste to go to see the mourning ladies at Montrésor,[137] where the bodies of the two brothers and the grandmother are, and picked us up again yesterday in this city, which we are leaving presently.

The trip to Normandy is put off.

The King has sent Messieurs de Bellièvre and de La Guiche[138] to Monsieur de Guise to summon him to come to court. We shall be there Thursday.

From Orléans, February 16th, in the morning.

Your very humble servant,

MONTAIGNE

35. *To Madame Paulmier*

[1588(?)]

To Madame Paulmier[139]

Madame, my friends know that from the first time I saw you I destined one of my books for you, for I felt that you had done them

134 Probably François de Jobert, sieur de Barrault, seneschal of Bazas.

135 Probably François IV de La Rochefoucauld, Protestant fighter killed in battle against the League in 1591; or possibly Jean-Louis de La Rochefoucauld, count of Randam, who died in 1590.

136 Odet de Matignon, comte de Thorigny, the marshal's only son (1559–95), later lieutenant-general in Normandy. Matignon had evidently learned of this event from him.

137 A little town about thirty-five miles southeast of Tours. The brothers are Duke Anne de Joyeuse (1561–87), a leading favorite of Henry III, and his brother Claude, both killed two months before at Coutras; the ladies are the mother and wife of Anne. Thorigny was related to Joyeuse.

138 Pompone de Bellièvre (1529–1607), future chancellor of France (1599–1604), and Philibert de La Guiche (c.1540–1607), grand master of the artillery, both trusted officers of Henry III.

139 Marguerite de Chaumont (1554–99), married since 1574 to Julien Paulmier or Le Paulmier.

great honor. But Monsieur Paulmier's courtesy deprives me of the means of giving it to you, for he has since obligated me far more than my book is worth. You will accept it, if you please, as being yours before I owed it, and will do me the favor of liking it, either for its own sake or for mine; and I shall keep entire the debt I owe to Monsieur Paulmier in order to get even, that is if I can, by some service.

36. *To Antoine Loisel:*[140] INSCRIPTION ON A COPY OF THE 1588 *ESSAYS*

[1588(?)]

This is a poor return for the handsome presents you have made to me of the fruits of your labors, but the fact is that it is the best return I can make. In God's name, sir, take the trouble to leaf through some part of this in some leisure hour and tell me what you think of it, for I fear I am getting worse as I go on.

For Monsieur Loisel.

37. *To King Henry IV*

[January 18, 1590(?)]

To the King

Sire,

It is a sign of rising above the weight and pressure of your great and important affairs to be able to stoop and lend yourself to the little people in their turn, according to the duty of your royal authority, which at every hour exposes you to every sort and condition of men and occupations. The fact, however, that Your Majesty has deigned to consider my letters and order them answered, I would rather owe to the benignity than to the vigor of your soul.

From the first I have considered you as destined for the rank you now occupy, and you may remember that even when I had to confess

140 Antoine Loisel (1536–1617), one of the leading lawyers of his time, had been advocate-general to the royal court of justice that Henry III had sent to Bordeaux in 1582 to judge all cases concerning the latest edict of pacification, and had dedicated his closing address to Montaigne in glowing terms.

it to my curate I did not fail to look upon your successes with a distinctly favorable eye. At present, with more reason and freedom, I embrace them with my full affection.

These successes serve you up north in action, but they serve you no less down here by reputation. The reverberation strikes as hard as the blow. We could not possibly draw from the justice of your cause such strong arguments to confirm or subdue your subjects as we do from the news of the prosperity of your campaigns. And I can assure Your Majesty that in producing the new changes to your advantage that you see in these parts, your happy escape from Dieppe[141] has most opportunely seconded the frank zeal and marvelous sagacity of Marshal de Matignon, from whom I like to believe that you do not daily receive so many good and signal services without remembering my assurances and my hopes.

For this coming summer I look forward not so much to the fruits that will feed me as to those of our common tranquillity, and I expect that this will spread over your affairs with the same happy tenor, dispersing, like the earlier ones, all the great promises with which your adversaries nourish the will of their men. Popular inclinations go in waves; if the leaning in your favor is once established, it will gather its own momentum and go all the way.

I would have wished, to be sure, that the individual profit of the soldiers in your army and the need to content them had not robbed you, especially in that principal city,[142] of the fine recommendation of having treated your mutinous subjects, in the height of victory, with more solace than do their protectors; and that you had shown that they were yours, not by a passing and usurped claim, but by a paternal and truly royal affection.

To conduct such affairs as those you have in hand it is necessary to use uncommon ways. Moreover, it has always been observed that where conquests, because of their greatness and difficulty, could not be thoroughly completed by arms and by force, they have been completed by clemency and magnanimity, excellent lures to attract men, especially toward the just and legitimate side. If rigor and punishment occur, they must be put off until after the possession of mastery. A great conqueror[143] of the past boasts that he has given his

141 At the battle of Arques just outside Dieppe, September 21, 1589.

142 Presumably Paris, the siege of which had not yet begun, but which Henry IV had attacked briefly (November 1–3, 1589).

143 Scipio the Elder, according to Livy. See *Essays* III: 9, p. 901.

subjugated enemies as much occasion to love him as his friends. And here we already feel a somewhat promising effect from the impression received by the towns that have strayed from you when they compare their harsh treatment with that of the towns that are obedient to you. Wishing for Your Majesty, as I do, a more present and less hazardous felicity, and that you may be rather loved than feared by your people,[144] and considering your welfare as necessarily attached to theirs, I rejoice that this same progress that you are making toward victory is also a progress toward easier conditions of peace.

Sire, your letter of the last of November has reached me only at this moment, and after the time you were pleased to set for me, when you were in Tours. I take it as a singular favor that you have deigned to make me feel that you would take pleasure in seeing me, a person so useless, but yours even more by affection than by duty. Your Majesty has very laudably adapted your outward appearance to the height of your new fortune, but you act just as laudably in not changing the good nature and ease of your inward disposition. You have been pleased to have consideration not only for my age but also for my wishes in summoning me to a place where you would be a little bit at rest from your labors and agitations. May it be soon in Paris, Sire; and there will be neither means nor health that I will not employ to come.

Your very humble and very obedient servant and subject,

MONTAIGNE

From Montaigne, January 18th.

144 Compare *Essays* II: 8, p. 345: "Even if I could make myself feared, I would much rather make myself loved." The impact of Machiavelli's *Prince* made this question a live one.

38. *To...*

[March or May 10, 1590]

To...[145]

Sir, I send you this letter, in view of my age, beyond the requirements of need, to assure you that I can recognize the fine things you said better than I showed you just now.

Now, in the uncertain state of our savings I have been attentive not to fail in regard to the care and attachment you have shown, which I know has placed me in your debt for many long years for good and loyal services. I even want so much to prove it to you that here is the claim, whose acquittance Monsieur Estienne[146] will take care of at any time you present yourself to him.

That is what I beg you to grant me as a token of your good friendship and a thing very much to my taste, the cost of which I take as a resource.

Whereupon I pray God to give you a long and happy life.

Ma... 10th, 1590.

MONTAIGNE

39. *To King Henry IV*

[September 2, 1590(?)]

To the King

Sire,

The letter of July 20th that Your Majesty has been pleased to write me was delivered to me only this morning and found me caught up in a very violent tertian fever that has been popular in this region since last month.

Sire, I take it as a very great honor to receive your commands, and I have not failed to write to Marshal de Matignon three times, very expressly, of my intention and obligation to go to see him, and

145 This letter was copied by a friend for Dr. J.-F. Payen, who first published it in 1855. The original has not been found since. Payen was unable to determine the addressee and whether the "Ma..." in the date stood for March or May. Montaigne seems to have written this in great haste and perhaps in pain or some kind of trouble, for many words are missing.

146 Monsieur Estienne has not been identified.

I even marked out for him the route I would take to go to meet him in safety if he saw fit. Having had no answer to all this, I assume that he has considered, on my behalf, the length and hazard of the roads.

Sire, may it please Your Majesty to do me the favor of believing that I will never begrudge my purse on the occasions for which I would not want to spare my life. I have never received any gift whatsoever from the liberality of kings, any more than I have asked it or deserved it; and I have received no payment for the steps I have taken in their service, of which Your Majesty has had partial knowledge. What I have done for your predecessors I will do still more willingly for you. I am, Sire, as rich as I wish to be. When I have exhausted my purse with Your Majesty in Paris, I will make bold to tell you so; and then, if you consider me worth keeping any longer in your retinue, I will cost you less than the least of your officers.

Sire, I pray God for your prosperity and health.

Your very humble and very obedient servant and subject,

MONTAIGNE

From Montaigne, September 2nd.